

PM: Muslim world must master new knowledge

Nst 2 2 APR 2002

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Muslim world today had a grave need to master new knowledge about science and technology, to be at the cutting edge.

The process of acquiring knowledge was not going to be easy and it would take time, Dr Mahathir said.

By comparison, the Prophet too did not convert all to Islam in one day as it required patience.

“We ignore the need to seek, acquire and improve the mastery of knowledge at our own risk”, he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the 31st international conference of the International Federation of Training and Development Organisations. It represents a gathering of individuals and associations involved in human resource development where issues pertaining to training and knowledge acquisition are discussed.

In his keynote address titled *The power of knowledge in the new era*, Dr Mahathir argued that knowledge was power more than ever before.

History, he said, had witnessed the superiority of knowledge to bring power to the earlier civilisations.

“This is still true today. The greatest powers dominating the world are the nations with the greatest amount of knowledge.”

He then reminded the audience of verses from the Quran which encouraged the acquisition of knowledge.

He pointed out that the European Renaissance would not have been possible without the accumulation of knowledge by the Muslims, without their great libraries in Cordoba, Baghdad, Cairo and elsewhere.

The present European progress is due to the knowledge they gained from the Muslims, knowledge which they expanded and deepened to counter the dominance of the Muslim civilisation.

For a period, the fear of knowledge descended on the Muslim world. The injunction to seek knowledge was interpreted as seeking religious knowledge.

Other kinds of knowledge not related to religious law in particular, to the creed and practice of Islam were not only discouraged but were actually prohibited.

But today we are broader-minded and prepared to use practically all the products of the infidels, But “we are the users only, not the producers and certainly not the inventors of these products — we are unable to invent or to produce because we lack the knowledge”.