

PM calls for more Indian Muslim literature in schools

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Indian Muslim literature should be published and distributed in schools so that the younger generation can refer to and understand the history of Islamic civilisation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister added that such literature should be made available in all national, Chinese and Tamil schools.

He said there was concern that the people, including the Indians themselves, would lose interest in such literature with the advent of information and communications technology, the Internet, e-mail and K-economy.

"It is, therefore, important to continue motivating, creating awareness, appreciating and researching Indian Muslim literature and to spread the wealth of Islamic literary works among the local multi-racial and religious people."

Launching the Malaysian Indian Muslim Literature Conference at the Putra World Trade Centre, he said other steps that could be taken included organising programmes like conferences.

"The civilisation of a particular race can be derived from its history. Creating awareness among the younger generation of their history will motivate the youths to continue writing Islamic history."

Dr Mahathir said he knew of Tamil language scholars who rarely referred to the works of renowned Indian Muslim literary figures.

"This is a waste for if we do not spread the wealth of such works ourselves, we cannot expect others or the younger generation to do so."

Cultures which are storehouses of manuscripts on the development of Islam, in this case by Tamil-speaking Muslims, would be meaningless if efforts were not made to create and preserve it, he said.

According to Dr Mahathir, Munshi Abdullah was an outstanding scholar of Indian-Muslim descent well known for his art in writing.

"It is my wish to see a person emerge, in this era, with the calibre of Munshi Abdullah, to record the development of Tamil-Islam literature in Malaysia for the perusal of generations to come."

Dr Mahathir said a community

would strive to preserve its culture even though it was "threatened" by a stronger element.

"This is why even when large groups in India embraced Islam, elements of Indian culture remained intact."

Nevertheless, said Dr Mahathir, the strength of Islamic culture caused the creation of what was called the Indo-Muslim composite culture.

"This is where Hindu and Islamic cultures merge with their respective cultural identities."

He said in southern India, those who had embraced Islam continued to converse in Tamil, and efforts were made to translate the Quran into Tamil.

On the two-day conference, the Prime Minister expressed hope that it would discover past and present literary works, and research their history and importance to Muslims universally.

Conference chairman Datuk Dr Mohamed Haniffa said the Malaysian Indian Muslim community fully supported the Government's efforts to teach Science and Mathematics in English.