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'Islamic art exhibitions dispel misperceptions'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Islamic art exhibitions can help dispel wrong perceptions about the religion including the belief that it promotes terrorism, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said Islamic art found all over the world could become an effective medium in the education of Islam.

"It is a very much misunderstood religion and not often associated with art. Presently, it is more closely linked with terrorists and acts of terrorism. But such acts involve a very few misguided Muslims.

"The majority are peace-loving people and they have contributed much to Islamic art," he said when opening the Islamic Art of India exhibition at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

The Prime Minister also launched a book about the museum and its website.

The three-month exhibition, held with the collaboration of the National Museum of New Delhi, comprises 174 pieces of Sultanate and Mughal Indian works of art from its collection.

The artefacts have been specifically selected to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of Islamic Indian art and culture, as well as its parallels and influences on the art of the Islamic and Malay world.

Dr Mahathir said it was important that works of art from other countries be exhibited here to enable others the chance to view and learn something from them.

However, the Prime Minister said one should understand that for various categories of art to prosper, it needed the patronage of wealthy people.

"There is a tendency to condemn people who are rich but without these people, the kings and monarchs to patronise arts, there will be no progress in this field."

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