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OIC-Science

ISLAMIC NATIONS NOT SPENDING ENOUGH ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 11 (Bernama) -- Islamic nations spend less than 0.5 percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on science and technology, and this is far below similar expenditures by other countries, Malaysian Science Academy vice-president Datuk Dr Salleh Mohd Nor said today.

Arab countries spent only 0.4 percent of their GDP on research and development (R&D) in science and technology (S&T), he told a news conference here.

"This contrasts with (the amount) countries like Cuba (1.26 percent), Israel (2.3 percent) and Japan (2.6 percent) spend on S&T. This shows how far behind Islamic countries are in R&D, and the number of Islamic countries doing this is also very small," he said.

Citing the UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) competitive report, Dr Salleh said only three Islamic countries, including Malaysia, emphasised S&T.

"Only Malaysia, Turkey and Indonesia are (Islamic countries) among the top 50 nations out of 87 countries surveyed which took serious steps to develop this field," he said.

However, in the case of Malaysia, its ratio of scientists to the population was still low at 15 per 10,000 people, he said.

"The government has made efforts to increase this to 60 per 10,000 people by 2010 through the Science and Technology Policy II to boost the development of S&T in the country in the future," he said.

It was against this background that Malaysia was taking the initiative to hold a science and technology conference in conjunction with the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in Putrajaya next month, he said.

"We will discuss the backwardness of OIC countries in S&T and stress the need for them to cooperate in these two fields," said Dr Salleh.

The conference will discuss S&T policies in Islamic countries, the factors causing them to lag behind in these areas and ways for Islamic countries to allocate more money for S&T.

"The findings of the conference from Oct 7 to 10 will be given to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for tabling at the OIC conference," he said.

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