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'Pave a clearer way for science'

By June Ramli

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - If just a fraction of rich Muslims contributed to scientific research to serve humanity, so many more Muslims would not be living in abject poverty, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"Three-quarters of the Muslims live without adequate food, without access to modern medicine and without the simple amenities that many of us take for granted," he said in his keynote address to the 14th Conference of Islamic Academy Science at a hotel here, today.

"One-fourth of Muslim men wallow in wealth, living in palaces, dining tables weighed down with food that will mostly go to waste, owning luxury cars, yachts, aircraft, with wives encased in gold and diamonds even though they are hidden from public eyes."

He said although Muslims were regarded as better scientists during Islam's golden age, they had lost ground to the Europeans who are today considered the world's greatest scientists.

"It is our deliberate rejection of science that has deprived us of the fruits of knowledge," Dr Mahathir said, citing this as one reason for the waning star of Muslim scientists.

He said Malaysia needed to pave a clearer way for science and scientists.

"We have to be hospitable to science and scientists. Provide funds, the facilities, the policies and the laws to induce our Muslim and non-Muslim scientists to come back and participate in our research and development for humanity."

He said the situation now was that many scientists who wanted to return home found it hard to do so. "They were often asked a barrage of questions that dampened their enthusiasm and hopes of practising science in the country.

"We have to speak to the relevant agencies to tell them to ease their regulations for these people and make exceptions as they are good for the country."

Dr Mahathir also said the rich should understand that when they enriched others they would also enrich themselves.

"A poor world will be a poor market for the rich to sell their goods and services to," he said.

"Instead of merely maximising the royalties or the return on the products of scientific research, they should direct their research to how science can better serve the poor."

(END) Source : New Straits Times