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Award in recognition of Dr M launched

THE OIC's Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (Ircica) yesterday launched an academic award in recognition of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's contribution to the Muslims' cultural development and academic research.

Called "The Mahathir Award for Islamic Studies", it will be presented once every four years to the best Doctor of Philosophy thesis on the Muslim world.

Istanbul-based Ircica director-general Professor Dr Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said the award was aimed at promoting studies on Islamic cultures and civilisation among young scholars.

According to him, the first recognition would be devoted to research on the Malay world.

The award, to be granted beginning 2005, will be presented to three young PhD scholars whose dissertations were completed between 2000 and 2004.

Ihsanoglu said the award was a modest step towards perpetuating Dr Mahathir's spirit and mission.

"Your benevolent deeds towards developing culture, arts and sciences have made your country a leading experience in the Muslim world and a source of inspiration for Muslim intellectuals," he said when announcing the award.

Ihsanoglu later presented Dr Mahathir a plate bearing a calligraphic writing of a hadith that reads, "The most blessed of mankind is the one most beneficial to mankind".