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Don't lose track of scientific objectives: Dr M

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said that the nation's scientific institutional infrastructure has to be strengthened and given full support by the government for the country to progress.

The former premier also claimed that changes were made to the nation's science, technology and innovation (STI) agenda following his retirement and the changes were retrogressive for science.

Speaking at the Academy of Sciences Malaysia's International Conference on 'Building an Innovative Nation' yesterday, Mahathir said that although the intentions could have been good, the changes ran counter to the nation's scientific objectives.

"The subtle dismantling of the system that was established earlier has somehow stunted the progress of the country's STI agenda... it is not easy to recover from such derailment.

"However, I am glad that the current leadership has shown keen interest to revive the nation's STI agenda," said

Mahathir.

"And I am told that even the post of science adviser has been resurrected... this is good news for the S&T (science and technology) community," Mahathir said.

He said that innovation must be embraced by the whole nation if Malaysia wants to enhance its competitiveness in the global marketplace.

"We need to develop products and services which have higher knowledge and technology content. This is where innovation is key. The question is, how do we create a culture of innovation among Malaysians?" he asked during his speech.

Mahathir said that many studies on innovation emphasise on five building blocks that are critical in building an innovation nation, namely: education, mindset, skills, infrastructure and policies.

"We need to examine whether the education system that we now have can help create the culture of creativity and entrepreneurship among our students since they will eventually be the ones to champion innovation."