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ISLAMIC ARTS MUSEUM SCHOLAR'S LIBRARY

# 'ISLAMIC ARTS A REMINDER OF PAST GLORY'

It also reminds Muslims how they have deviated from pursuing global knowledge, says PM

SYED UMAR ARIFF
   
 AND RIZANIZAM ABDUL HAMID
   
 KUALA LUMPUR
   
[cnews@nstp.com.my](mailto:cnews@nstp.com.my)

**T**HE collection housed in the Islamic Arts Museum is a reminder of Islam's past glory, as well as how Muslims have deviated from pursuing global knowledge and intellectualism.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in his speech at the opening of the Scholar's Library at the Islamic Arts Museum

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here, said Islamic knowledge and sciences provided the light to the darkness in the Western world.

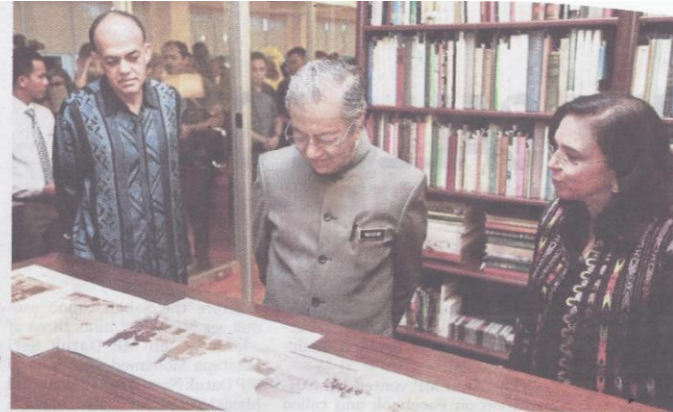
"These exhibitions should remind us of how Islam reached the pinnacle of its glory.

"These exhibitions should also remind us of how Muslims have deviated and gone off track, withdrawing into a cocoon in the name of the religion.

"Muslims should then reflect on the works and artefacts which made Islam and Muslims great.

"It was with this in mind that the Albukhary Foundation and I pursued this idea of the Islamic Arts Museum. It is not merely to glorify our Islamic past. Neither is it intended to look down at other civilisations. It stands as a reminder of what we can be, how we managed to get there and how we can falter."

He said the museum had become more than a repository for



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad visiting the Scholar's Library after its launch at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY SAIRIEN NAFIS

Islamic arts.

"The initial objective was simply to set up a centre where we can house and host arts, artefacts and other works that would make Malaysians aware of the innate beauty of Islamic culture, which have not been given its due recognition.

"And today, 20 years later, we are witnessing a full-fledged museum and more, achieving what it was intended and, in fact, grown beyond what we hoped for when the idea was conceived.

"I admit I have a personal attachment to this museum. From its ground-breaking day in 1997 to its launch in 1998, I kept a close watch on its development. Its beginning was humble — the galleries displayed only a few artefacts and its resources were quite limited.

"But the Albukhary Foundation and the museum's management had persevered and today, its galleries display the full breadth of the Islamic world's civilisations and cultures.

"The government is committed in supporting the endeavours pursued by our museums, including the Islamic Arts Museum. I am aware of the difficulties faced by the curators in sourcing exhibition materials, especially when they involved other nations and foreign authorities. Wherever possible, the government is prepared to help."

On the Scholar's Library, Dr Mahathir said it was an impressive collection of more than 20,000 volumes of books and journals from all over the world.

"These publications are in dif-

ferent languages; multi-discipline and it is now open to public.

"These volumes cover the fields of Islamic arts and architecture, history, religion bibliography, library science, language and literature.

"There is also an emphasis on philosophy, science, medicine, sociology, anthropology, military sciences and technology.

"I am told that the Scholar's Library has a dedicated section on rare and limited edition publications with printed books that go as far back as the as early 17th century.

"It is, I am also told, the largest and most comprehensive museum library in Southeast Asia and its primary mission is to support the study and research of the museum's collection."