

Probe into post-colonial Western influences

Universiti Teknologi Petronas don receives grant to research Malay attitudes



I hope my work will contribute to the study of Malay society, says Ahmad Murad Merican

PROFESSOR Ahmad Murad Merican from Universiti Teknologi Petronas' Department of Management and Humanities was recently appointed as Perdana Leadership Foundation's (PLF) first Resident Fellow under the foundation's Honorary President Fellowship Award.

As the foundation's first Resident Fellow, Ahmad Murad will receive a grant of RM100,000 from Yayasan Al-Bukhary to conduct his research on Malay Attitudes Towards the West: Engaging Malay Thought on European Civilisation and Modernity in Constructing Self, Nation and Identity.

Foundation executive director Tan Sri Nik Mohamed Nik Yaacob said at the signing of the agreement at PLF last week: "As a foundation dedicated to the study of nation-building issues, it welcomes Ahmad Murad and looks forward to the results of his research."

"This investigation into post-colonial Western influences on our national identity will complement other scholars' continuing work and, hopefully, will lead us to understand ourselves better."

Ahmad Murad's research will examine the various forms and strands of Malay Occidentalism in modern periods and trace the intellectual history of the Malays with regard to Europe and other foreign countries such as Japan, Iran and Turkey.

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Case for Malay Occidentalism?

PEOPLE in the East are familiar with how the West constructs the image of the Eastern world and the Malays — they have produced vast amounts of literature of the "Other" from a Euro-centric perspective.

Professor Ahmad Murad Merican wants to investigate how Malays construct an image of Europe and the West.

"I am interested to see if there is any Malay Occidentalism," he says. "I want to examine how we can grapple with Malay thinking outside the realm and framework of mainstream Western thinking."

Ahmad Murad from Universiti Teknologi Petronas' Department of Management and Humanities is Perdana Leadership Foundation's first Resident Fellow.

For this, he will be referring to Malay works from specific Malay thinkers.

He will study whether there

are any particular forms of Malay expressions with regard to the West with the aim of revealing something original and indigenous to the Malays.

One of the ways to identify what is called "indigeneity" (referring to something original and authentic) of thought is to place and study Malay reactions and responses to European civilisations.

This study indicates a Malay system of knowledge production concerning the West.

And this is set against the background of historical and intellectual experiences of the Malays in contrast to the Europeans such as the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British.

"I hope my work will contribute to the study of Malay society and help us understand ourselves," says Ahmad Murad. — **By NURJEHAN MOHAMED**

Ahmad Murad Merican's study is set against the background of historical and intellectual experiences of the Malays in contrast to the Europeans such as the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British.