

ISLAMIC ARTS MUSEUM MALAYSIA (IAMM) 20TH ANNIVERSARY

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Venue : ISLAMIC ARTS MUSEUM MALAYSIA, KUALA LUMPUR

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1. It is indeed an honour to be invited to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Albukhary Foundation and the 20th anniversary of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia. Both have made notable contributions to the nation and my heartiest congratulations to them on this auspicious occasion.

2. Twenty years ago, in a discussion with representatives of the Albukhary Foundation, the idea of having an Islamic Arts Museum here was hatched. 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 rightful recognition.

3. And today, 20 years later, we are witness to 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.

4. I admit I have a personal attachment to this Museum. From its groundbreaking 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 are displaying the full breadth of the Islamic world's civilisations and cultures.

5. The management have proven to have a knack for identifying important contributions of Muslim Scholars, craftsmen and patrons, and their innovations in exhibiting these artefacts and works had attracted locals but also those from abroad.

6. The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia has indeed carved a name alongside other renowned and earlier established Islamic Museums and galleries around the world. It is an educational hub for researchers and a haven for art lovers and enthusiasts.

7. In no small ways, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia has been able to share with the world the beauty of Islamic arts and culture, provided insights on how Islam was spread, its philosophy, its contribution in science and technology, medicine, mathematics and other contributions to global intellectualism.

8. In essence, this museum has managed to provide a reflection of Islam as ad-deen, a way of life and what made it able to spread and embraced by the different citizens of the world.

9. These exhibitions should remind us of how Islam reached the pinnacle of its glory and a global phenomenon. At its height, Islamic knowledge and sciences provided the light to the darkness in the Western world. These exhibitions should also remind us of how Muslims have deviated and slipped off the track, withdrawing into a cocoon in the name of the religion. Muslims should then reflect on the works and artefacts that the worldly attitude and the thirst for all types of knowledge and sciences that made the religion and Muslims great.

10. It was with this in mind that the Albukhary and me pursued this idea of having this 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 slip down the road.

11. This 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 assist.

12. I am also happy to note that Albukhary had also successfully taken these efforts to the heart of the Western world. Albukhary Foundation's newly refurbished Gallery of the Islamic World, in the British Museum in London, is visited by over 7 million people annually. It is a successful collaboration and the gallery displays works of Islamic Art, History, Culture and Civilisations. A successful collaboration and partnership.

13. Another achievement of the Albukhary Foundation that is worthy of note is its Scholar's Library that has an impressive collection of more than 20,000 volumes of books and journals, sourced from all over the world. These publications are in different languages; multi-disciplinary 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 also informed that the scholar's library has a dedicated section of rare and limited edition publications with printed books that go as far back as the early 17th century.

14. It is, I am also told to be 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.

15. For that, I am indeed happy to launch the Scholar's Library today. Congratulations to the Albukhary Foundation and the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia for these efforts that I am sure will contribute much to our nation's growth.

Thank you.

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