

Penyampai : TAN SRI DATO SERI AHMAD SARJI BIN ABDUL HAMID
Tajuk : THE SEMINAR ON ISLAM, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Lokasi : IKIM MALAYSIA
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1. I was asked by the organizer to talk on the topic of "Science and Technology Challenges to the Muslim Ummah". The theme itself provide a paradox- putting Islam as something alien to science and technology. Obviously, this is not the case.

2. The biggest impetus to science and technological enterprises among the Muslims come from the message of the Holy Quran itself. There are numerous verses in the Holy Quran which encourage Muslims to think and to use their cognitive ability to understand the universe and its dynamic; the creation and the complexity of men, animal and biological systems; the earth, ocean, atmosphere, outer space and many others.

3. The Muslims in the past have taken these challenges. During the Islamic renaissance era (from 758 AD to 1250AD), science and technological enterprises flourished and became the strong pillars of the Islamic civilization.

4. During this period, the Muslims scientists have adopted an open and pro-active approach towards learning and knowledge creation. To them, the Islamic commonwealth cut across colours, creeds and geographical boundaries. Islamic society was tolerance to other religions and receptive to their universal ideas.

5. As an example, the earlier exposure to the Indo- Greek scholarly works among the Muslims scientists disseminated the idea of systems, generalization and basic theories in understanding the scientific phenomena. This idea was further developed into a methodology of the scientific method of understanding physical phenomena by the Muslim scientists. It propagated the idea of experimentation in the Laboratory and followed by the detail observation of the results.

6. This was an important breakthrough in the scientific enterprise which has led into a more systematic and reliable pursuits of the scientific knowledge.

7. At the later stage, the Muslim scientists have garnered enough strength and confidence to explore and discover new scientific knowledge themselves. Among others, they have introduced the inductive method of reasoning, they invented Algebra, logarithm, applied astronomy and modern medical techniques which have a lasting impact in the medical discipline. Most of their early works have a profound impact on the development of what we known as modern secular sciences.

Ladies And Gentleman,

8. Such was the history of science and technology development in Islam. Islam cannot be alien to science and technology. The theme given to me must have suggested the challenges that come from the period of the dark ages of science and technology in Islam. This happen after the period of the Islamic Renaissance - beginning after the 11th century and completely engulfed the Muslim world by the year 1350AD and until today.

9. The process that has been responsible in bringing down the glory of science and technology in the Islamic civilization is still relevant to the Muslims and the Muslim polities of today.

Let me briefly described the important one;

(i) There has been a shift of priority from among the ruling class elites. The strong support and interest on the scientific enterprises have shifted to other priorities such as internal power struggles and feuds and the pursuits of pleasure, luxury and pomp.

(ii) Intellectually, there have been a rapid decline and subsequent death of the scientific curiosity on the part of the individual Muslim. Many scholars have attributed this process as to the 'closing of the Muslim mind'. The inquisitive mind of the Muslim are trapped in blind imitation, authoritarianism and the imposition of taqlid, that is the unquestioning following of the opinion and judgement of the classical Islamic jurists who operate in a different social and cultural contexts;

(iii) Over and sometime misplaced enthusiasm on the pursuing of the Islamisation of knowledge or simply become fanatic over the issue.

10. The process of the Islamisation of knowledge has to be put in the right perspective. It is a fact that the current scientific knowledge, mostly coming from the western secular civilization is not totally unIslamic. The wholesome believe that the present corpus of the scientific knowledge belong exclusively to a particular belief system warrant our close scrutiny.

11. Wouldn't it be more accurate to perceive that this body of knowledge at a particular historical time had originated from a particular civilization, which in turn might have been borrowed and developed from another civilization?. If this is the case, it would be appropriate to perceive the task of developing science and technology in the Islamic countries from the perspective of the natural process of civilizational dynamic between the Islamic civilization and the western - secular civilization. In this dynamic, the Islamic countries are required to be pro-active in engaging with the dominant civilization and at the same time having a specific internal agenda based on one own's need.

Ladies And Gentlemen,

12. The biggest single challenge to the Muslim involvement and excellence in science and technology today is to have the right mental framework and attitude.

13. I hope the ensuing discussion in the seminar would be brave, comprehensive and well focussed in debating and finding solution to all the doubts. With that note and with Bismillahirrahmannirrahim, I officially declare open the seminar on "Islam, Science and Technology". Thank you and wassalamualaikum warah matullah hiwa barokatuh.