

Dr M: How Islam can regain glory

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Islam will regain its past glory if a thorough study is carried out to accurately interpret the Quran and the Sunnah, **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said.

Calling for a such a study, the Prime Minister said the present backwardness of Muslims could be attributed to misinterpretations of the Quranic message and the apostelic traditions.

"We cannot blame the Quran and the Sunnah," he said. "It could be that the interpretations were wrong. Our

By RASHID BAKAR

problem now is to determine the correct interpretation."

He was speaking at the opening of a seminar — *Understanding and Practice of Islam* — attended by 800 overseas-bound students.

Dr Mahathir said that the Quran and Sunnah had been subjected to too many differing interpretations, resulting in the emergence of rival sects prepared even to go to war against each other.

To understand the true teachings of Islam, he said, it was not enough to merely read the Quran and records of the Sunnah; one would have to be guided by the interpretations of experts.

But, he cautioned, "we should remember that the interpreters are not infallible as they are also human beings and there have been differing opinions among them."

He said the study he was calling for should be undertaken by in-

tellectuals who were open-minded. Otherwise their interpretations might again be biased.

Dr Mahathir lamented the tendency of present-day Muslims to emphasise trivialities at the expense of substantial matters in their practice of Islam.

"In fact, we are more obsessed with form rather than substance," he said. This has resulted in Muslims practising a form of "lopsided Islam" as opposed to "wholesome Islam".

He said Muslims

should stop fooling themselves into believing that they were still as progressive as their predecessors of the first and second Hijrah centuries.

"The fact is that we are now dependent on others in a lot of matters," he said.

He said Muslims would continue to be confused if they were insincere in interpreting Islam.

"What is happening now is that Muslims are being made a tool of the non-Muslims who use Islam as a means."

He called on participants of the seminar to find ways in which they could best contribute to Islam and not use it as a forum to criticise others.