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# Mistaking Quran's teachings 'cause of failures'

By Farush Khan  
and Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The present sad state of affairs affecting Muslims is possibly due to their belief in wrongly-interpreted teachings of the Quran, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said when Muslims accepted and followed these wrongly-interpreted teachings in the belief that they were the true teachings of the Quran, they would certainly not achieve happiness in life.

"On top of that, they may fail and suffer," he said when opening the fifth international seminar on Al-Quran at Pusat Islam here.

Dr Mahathir said the failure of the Muslims to achieve prosperity was not solely due to their unwillingness to practise the teachings of Islam.

Most of their failures, he said, were caused by their lack of understanding of the real teachings of the Quran.

He said this had led to their practices being wrong as well and as a result could not enjoy a prosperous and respectable life.

The Prime Minister said the reason was that even though some people were fluent in Arabic and were able to read it, the meanings and messages contained in the verses of the Quran could not be so easily understood by self-reading.

As a result, he said, Muslims who wished to understand the contents of the Quran were forced to depend on the interpretations

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made by recognised interpreters.

"In their effort to explain the contents of the Quran as understood by the interpreters, they have to use their own words and add to the verses of the Quran to explain the relevant meaning and messages.

"Certainly for Muslims who do not understand the Arabic language, they can only read the translation in their own language as directly translated from the Quran."

Hence, it is not the contents of the Quran which they receive as the teachings of the Quran but rather the translation and interpretation of these translations made by the interpreters and translators," he added.

Dr Mahathir said when one disputed the teachings of Islam, he must remember that the conflict was not with the Quran or the verses in it, which were faultless and unchangeable.

"What we are disputing or debating are the interpretations by interpreters, who, no matter how knowledgeable they may be, are still ordinary human beings with weaknesses known to all mortals," he said.

He said it would be a great loss for Muslims if they were to hold firmly and defend at all costs not the teachings of the Quran but rather the opinions of ordinary human beings, which

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# Dr M: Attention not given to other matters

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were certainly not on par with the revelations.

"Is it not possible that the backwardness of Muslims is caused by the wrong interpretations by the interpreters?" he asked. "What is certain is that the backwardness is not caused by the Quran, which teaches and guides Muslims.

"If we accept this, then we cannot be wrong if we are to review and reject certain interpretations. And we should also not feel obstructed by suggestions that the door of *ijtihad* (effort) has been shut and that we cannot review the interpretations and contents of the Quran anymore.

"Adherence to the belief that the door to *ijtihad* is

closed can possibly lead to the upholding of these incorrect interpretations and placing them on par with God's revelations.

"This can lead us to believe that the interpretations are faultless and unchangeable," he said.

He said the wrongly-interpreted teachings of the Quran had spread widely in the Muslim world for centuries. Among the incorrect interpretations were that important education and knowledge were only related to religion. The more specific and deep the religious knowledge, the better it was for a Muslim.

He said since almost all the interpreters, religious teachers and Muslim missionaries were those who

majored and specialised in religion, their emphasis would certainly be in the field of religion.

"Other fields are not considered important and they normally will not urge the Muslims to seek knowledge or jobs in other fields.

"At times they offer opinions that Muslims who excel or are educated in other areas will not get any rewards in the hereafter. These people are not considered strong Muslims."

He said with the spread of such views, the majority of the Muslims were not so keen in seeking knowledge which was not specifically related to the Islamic religion.

"If today there are Muslims who are backward in

various aspects of knowledge and efficiency to the extent that they cannot preserve their dignity, protect Muslims from being attacked, subjugated and victimised, cannot exploit the abundant resources blessed by God on their countries; and if Muslims today do things not permitted by Islam and in fact leave the religion, it is because they are frustrated with their weaknesses and feel humiliated."

The fact that the Quran not only stressed on knowledge of the teachings of Islam, but also of hundreds of other matters related to life and the prosperity of the Muslims, was not given attention by many interpreters and scholars.