

Dr M: Muslims need to be strong to face enemies

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selves from oppression, he said.

"They fight and die in order to retaliate, in order to take revenge, in order to vent their anger," he told international scholars and academia at a public lecture on *Muslim Unity in the Face of Challenges and Threats* at the Al Azhar University here yesterday.

Contrary to some beliefs that terrorism had helped the cause of Islam, its enemies in fact use these acts to retaliate against Muslims and treat them and their religion with contempt, Dr Mahathir said, attributing this to the "thousands of different interpretations" of Islam and the very many different sects, each claiming to be true followers of Islam.

He said the very people who professed that one should not re-examine and re-interpret Islam were themselves making new interpretations every day.

"And their interpretations are meant only to enhance their position in the community, to ensure support for their politics," the Prime Minister added.

The result of this confusion, he said, was a deeply divided race prone to disputes and to fighting each other.

"Disunited, confused about Islam, fighting each other for power, lacking in essential knowledge and skills, misapplying their God-given wealth, the Muslims of today have reached the lowest point in their development," he said.

Tracing developments in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said a political party in the country had convinced its followers that anyone not joining or supporting it was not a Muslim.

"Tens of thousands of Malay Muslims believe this, believe even that

voting for this party in elections will guarantee a place for them in heaven.

"It sounds ridiculous except that the followers are deadly serious in their acceptance and belief, and in their enmity towards those who do not join the party or vote in elections for it."

There was now a deep split among the Muslims of Malaysia, caused by Muslim politicians abusing the teachings of Islam, he added.

On Muslims trying to explain their sad plight by saying that in the next world the enemies of Islam would be punished and thrown into hell because of what they did to them in this world,

Dr Mahathir said:

"The idea that we must suffer in silence and await our heaven in the next world is not Islamic. In fact, it goes against the teaching of the Prophet. What is important is to deter and defeat our enemies.

"And to do this today, we need guns and rockets, warships and warplanes, and armoured cars. We cannot allow others to supply these forever. We need to invent, design, produce and test our own weapons of defence," he said.

As such, Dr Mahathir said, Muslims needed science and mathematics and

to acquire technological skills.

The Prime Minister said the way Islam was being practised today would not restore the greatness of the religion.

"We simply refuse to adhere to the true teachings of Islam and strive to better our lot on this earth as much as we prepare for the life in the hereafter. We ignore the Quranic injunction that Allah will not change our fate unless we strive to change it ourselves.

"And so we will continue to be oppressed, to be attacked, bombed and killed, while our religion, Islam, is condemned as false," he said.