

PM: Return to true teachings of Islam

SUN 23 JAN 2003

CAIRO: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Muslims yesterday to embrace each other as brothers and return to the true teachings of Islam, or risk being oppressed and have their religion treated with contempt.

The prime minister said peace and the brotherhood of Muslims were fundamental teachings of Islam, and if this injunction alone was upheld, there would be Muslim unity and the Muslims would be strong.

He said Muslims now were so disunited that in the pursuit of the interests of their countries, they were prepared to fight their Muslim brothers from other countries and join opposing camps, even those of their non-Muslim enemies.

Delivering a hard-hitting speech focusing on Muslim unity at a gathering of international scholars and students at Al Azhar University here, he said: "Unable to protect themselves, they allow themselves to be manipulated against their co-religionists.

"They become pawns in the games other people play. They have lost self-respect and are not following the teachings of Islam."

Mahathir arrived in Cairo from Lebanon on Tuesday evening for a three-day working visit to Egypt. His trip comes amid the spectre of war in Iraq and heightened tensions over the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

He said Muslims of today had reached the lowest point in their development because they were disunited, confused about Islam, fought each other for power, lacked essential knowledge and skills, misapplied their God-given wealth.

But this, he lamented, did not stop them from continuing to do what was prohibited by Islam and they were not willing to see the reality of the situation or to admit that they had deviated from the teachings of their religion.

He said some Muslims had resorted to terrorism because they were frustrated and angry, with many believing

that they had been successful in this.

"All that has happened is that the enemies of Islam have found justification for putting more pressure on the Muslims, attacking and killing them, treating them and their religion with contempt," he said.

He said Muslims had lost their way and were nowhere near achieving the greatness that was once Islam.

"How long can we go on doing this? Will what we are doing today restore the greatness of our religion and the *fitrah* that it should be to mankind?" he asked.

"Will it deliver us from oppression by our detractors? Frankly I don't think so.

"It is not because we are incapable of developing ourselves to the level where others would be forced to respect us and our religion. It is simply because we refuse to adhere to the true teachings of Islam and to strive to better our lot on earth as much as we prepare for life in the hereafter." -