

## Muslims should blame themselves, says Dr M

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Many of the crises faced by Muslims and the Muslim world were largely due to their own fault, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The former prime minister said crises were not something new to the Muslim world as they existed since the Quran began to be interpreted in many ways by different groups.

"Crises and problems also began when Muslim scholars began to neglect subjects perceived to be secular such as science, mathematics, medicine and engineering, but focused only on religious studies.

"I would like to insist that the fault lies in ourselves. We are the people to be blamed, letting ourselves split by so many sects and different interpretations of the Quran," Dr Mahathir said in his

keynote address on "Global Peace: Crisis in the Muslim World" at the International Islamic University (IIU), Gombak, near here.

At one time, Dr Mahathir said, Muslims were leaders in science, mathematics, astronomy, architecture, engineering and medicine while the Western world lagged behind them and were in the dark ages.

However, the Europeans, noticing the knowledge acquired by Muslim scholars, began to learn Arabic to get access to the (various fields of) knowledge and got out of the dark ages and achieved the Renaissance.

He said while the Europeans developed powerful military forces, Muslims however, become less knowledgeable and less capable of doing things for themselves, including defending themselves.



**A memento:** Tuanku Najihah receiving a souvenir from Muhammad Sayyid at the conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

# Be fair in your judgment, says scholar

## Not everyone in the West is anti-Islam, Muslims told

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Muslims should refrain from making simplistic assumptions that the West is anti-Islam, said the world's foremost Sunni scholar.

The Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar University, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawy, said that while Muslims must defend Islam, the West had rational people who truly respected Islamic tenets and values.

"We cannot accept the generalisation that the West is against us. Don't be too reckless in labelling them as anti-Islam or anti-Muslims as there are Westerners who support Islam and Muslims.

"Both sides want to seek knowledge and learn from each other," he told reporters after receiving an honorary doctorate degree from Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia at the third World Multaqa conference of Al-Azhar University Alumni yesterday.

University chancellor Tengku Ampuan Negri Sembilan Tuanku Najihah Tunku Besar Burhanuddin presented the doctorate in Islamic understanding and management to him during a special convocation ceremony.

The Grand Sheikh, who is the top spiritual authority of the world's Sunni population, was responding to a question about how Muslims could correct negative Western thinking about Islam.

He warned that some Muslims did more harm against Islam, more than the harm inflicted on Islam by Western countries.

"We must be fair and just in our judgment of others," he added.

He said many Muslim scholars were able to gain knowledge in many fields in top Western universities where they were treated well by their secular hosts.

And the influx of Westerners into the Al-Azhar University had helped the Muslim world to present an unbiased view of Islam to the world, he said.

"The university has accepted more than 3,000 non-Arab students from the United States, Europe, Asia and Africa this year, and many of them became good Muslims too," he added.

The Grand Sheikh was also asked about the marked increase in differences in beliefs between the Sunni and Shi'ite sects.

He replied that Muslims should end the theological differences as there was no difference between Muslims. "They have the same faith."

In his acceptance speech, Sheikh Muhammad said Islam urged people to acquire both spiritual and worldly knowledge as both were deemed beneficial for mankind.

"Life is useless without having knowledge in both areas," he said.