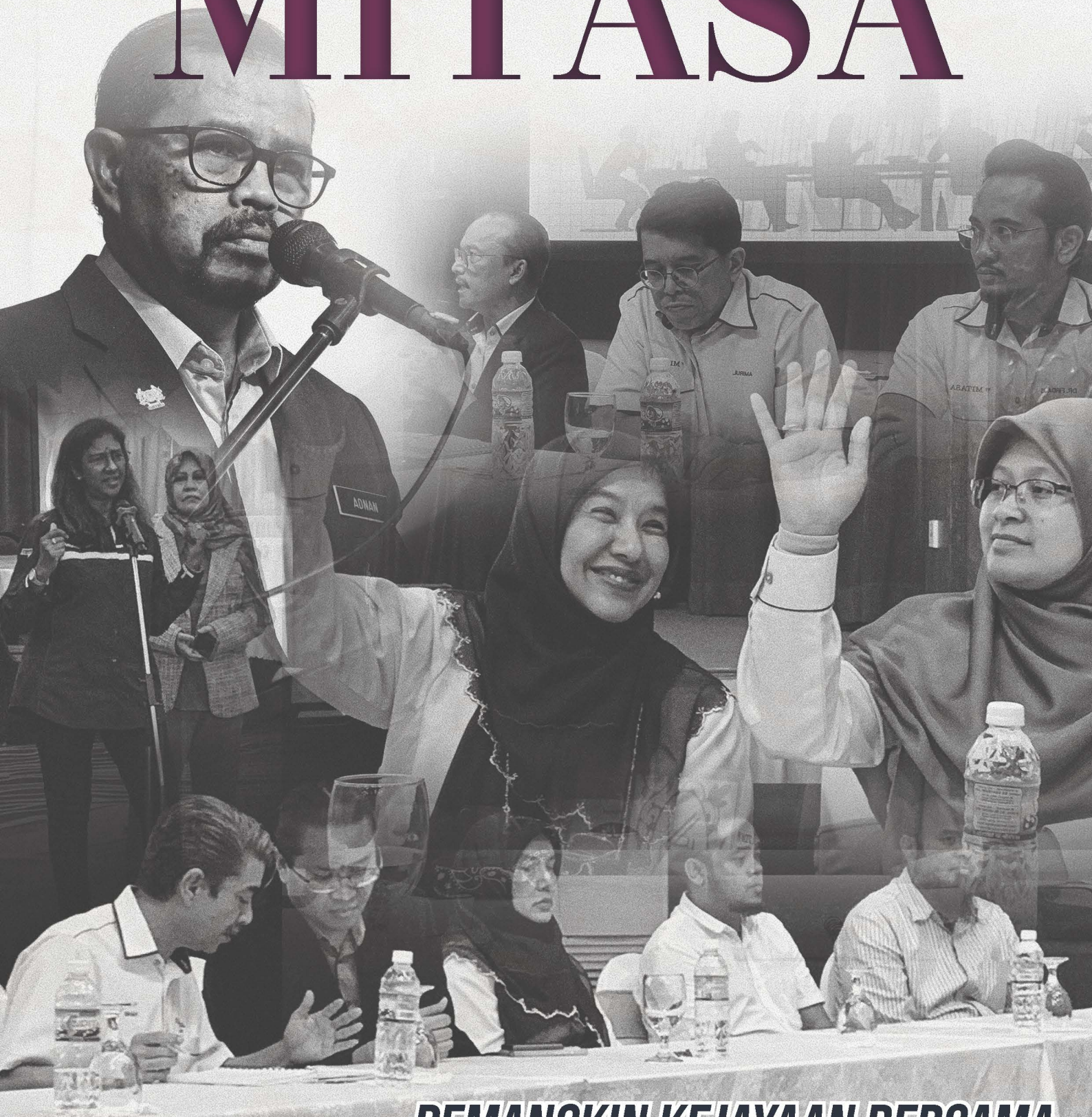


Suara

MITASA



PEMANGKIN KEJAYAAN BERSAMA



OMBUDSMAN
DAN UNIVERSITI

MESYUARAT AGUNG
TRI TAHUNAN MITASA
2025-2028

MAJLIS SAMBUTAN HARI
DAN BULAN AKADEMIKA
UITM 2025

PEMBENTANGAN LIMA KERTAS KERJA
KESETERAAN PENYELIAAN MELIBATKAN
KENAIKAN PANGKAT

WACANA TOKOH: BAHASA DAN JATI DIRI
BANGSA DI KONVENSYEN 152 PERINGKAT
KEBANGSAAN 2025

Navigating Towards a More Meaningful Life

Nik Mastura binti Nik Ismail Azlan
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa

I was first introduced to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs during one of the semesters of my Bachelor's Degree programme. This hierarchy of needs, which was pioneered by Abraham Maslow in the 1940s (Suryavanshi, 2024; McLeod, 2025), categorizes human needs in a pyramid form (refer to diagram). At the base of the pyramid, the first stage in human life is physiological needs (food, water, comfort, rest), which are crucial for survival. After fulfilling these needs, the second stage involves achieving physical and emotional safety and security. The third stage is to ensure psychological needs, which is to socially belong in a community and be loved by others. In the fourth stage, achieving prestige and accomplishments is essential to supposedly build a strong self-esteem. According to the hierarchy, only when all these four stages are attained can one be able to achieve self-actualization; the final stage where an individual acquires a high level of emotional, mental, spiritual and moral satisfaction in life. Only a small percentage of people are considered to be able to achieve this level.



But what if the reality is actually the opposite? In Al Quran, Surah Ibrahim (chapter 14), verse 37, it reveals that the pyramid should be practised invertedly. Allah S.W.T (glory be to Him, the Exalted) commanded Prophet Ibrahim A.S. (peace be upon him) to leave his wife, Hajar R.A. (may Allah be pleased with her), and their child, Ismail A.S. (peace be upon him),

in a barren desert in Mecca with no water and food around as a test of faith. As he was walking away, Prophet Ibrahim A.S. made a verbal prayer,

'Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley, near Your Sacred House, our Lord, so that they may establish prayer.'
(Al Quran, chapter 14, verse 37).

Here, we can read that the first thing he requested from Allah S.W.T was for his wife and son to be able to establish 'salah' (physical worship), not food, drink nor shelter. According to Maslow's hierarchy, the basic requirement for life is to seek food, water, and shelter first. However, Prophet Ibrahim A.S. left his wife and son with the conviction, reliance, and full trust that no one but Allah S.W.T. could protect and provide for them. This act of surrendering his family's lives and allowing the Most Powerful to take control reflects that spiritual fulfilment (self-actualization) comes first. In other words, having a realization that when an individual is powerless, he or she is only left at the mercy of Allah S.W.T.

Then, Prophet Ibrahim A.S. continued to pray,

'So make the hearts of "believing" people inclined towards them...'
(Al Quran, chapter 14, verse 37).

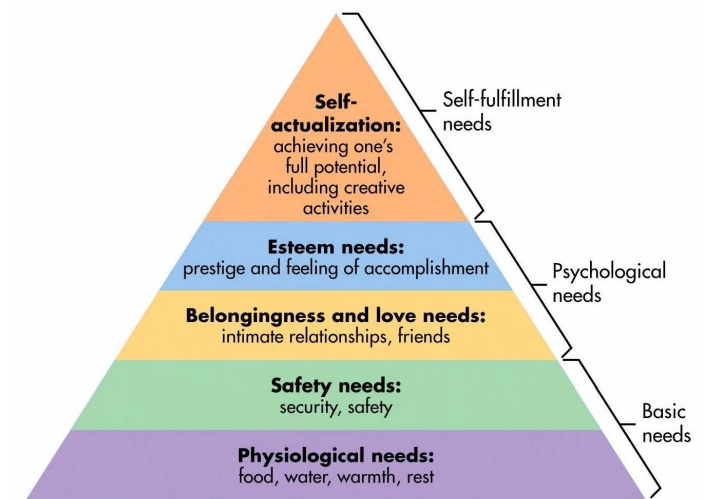
This was requesting from Allah S.W.T to put love for his wife and son in the hearts of other people, who would find them, to be kind to his family and help them in their time of isolation, asking for compassion (psychological need).

Only towards the end of the verse did Prophet Ibrahim A.S. asked for his family to be provided with food (basic/physiological need),

'...and provide them with fruits, so perhaps they will be thankful.'
(Al Quran, chapter 14, verse 37).

If we look at the order of prayer in the verse, Prophet Ibrahim A.S. first looked towards spiritual fulfilment (self-actualization), followed by social need (psychological) then finally, basic needs (physiological). But at the end, when he asked Allah S.W.T to provide his family with fruits, he still connected it to worship by saying, *'...so perhaps they will be thankful.'* (Al Quran, chapter 14, verse 37). Therefore, what we can learn from this verse alone is that at all stages of needs, spiritual fulfilment (self-actualization) is the most essential. This is because Allah S.W.T created us to always be in need of Him,

'And whoever is mindful of Allah, He will make a way out for them, and provide for them from sources they could never imagine. And whoever places their trust in Allah, He alone is sufficient for them.'
(Al Quran, chapter 65, verses 2-3).



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2025)

Based on this understanding, Maslow's Hierarchy is not an accurate framework of life. It teaches humans that we need to strive for physiological, physical and psychological needs (also known as the pursuit of happiness) before we can achieve self-actualization (a fulfilled life). If we observe our surroundings, the problem with this way of life is that many people usually end up in an existential crisis. An existential crisis is a period when an individual starts profoundly questioning the true meaning, purpose and value of life after struggling through many hardships.

Questions like, "What is the purpose of my life?" "Why am I here?" or "Is this life even worth it?" start arising in one's mind. Al-Quran teaches us that when we have *tawakkul* (a full surrender and reliance) on Allah S.W.T for every pursuit in life, then life will begin to become more meaningful. We no longer become stressed, anxious or worried about what lies ahead in the future. Henceforth, instead of focusing on how to pursue life, we need to start developing the self-actualization that life will work out on its own according to Allah's decree.

PERFECTION IS NOT ATTAINABLE.

**BUT IF WE CHASE PERFECTION,
WE CAN CHASE**

EXCELLENCE.