

PM: INTERPRET

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QURAN CORRECTLY

It should be in the interest of Muslims, not individuals, says Dr M

By SHAILA KOSHY

KUALA LUMPUR: Interpretation of the Quran should not be confined to religious scholars alone, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"The problems of today require that scholars of other disciplines be also involved in the interpretations," the Prime Minister said.

He said that progress in medical science, genetics, space explorations and commerce and industry required deep knowledge in these subjects in order to relate to the teachings of the Quran.

"If they are not, there is a grave danger of the Quran being regarded by some Muslims as irrelevant," he said at the opening of the 4th International Seminar on the Al-Quran at Pusat Islam here.

Dr Mahathir said the interpretations of the Quran should be in the interest of Islam and Muslims and not to serve those who interpret them or any individual or political group.

"It is not the Quran but the interpreters who are misleading, lacking in knowledge and out of date," he added.

He said the seminar was important to Malaysia's development to be in line with the teachings of Islam.

Dr Mahathir said there was a tendency among some sects and ulamas to be rigid in their interpretation.

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PM tells of need to interpret Quran correctly

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He said it was bigotry on the part of the imams and ulamas which caused misunderstandings among Muslims, resulting in division and conflicts.

He said Muslims today could not be said to have achieved a gracious and glorious life and civilisation.

He said the only logical explanation for the failures was wrong interpretation of the Quran.

Dr Mahathir said it was "necessary now to go back to the Quran and disregard the interpretations made by some of the ulamas after the period of Islamic glory."

Citing an example, Dr Mahathir said the Quran had "exhorted Muslims to have horses and swords ready for their defence."

"The defence needs now must involve strategies and weapons of modern defence.

"Only the most dogmatic interpreters of the Quran would insist that we prepare horses and swords," he added.

Dr Mahathir said there was evidence that some ulamas were more interested in preserving their influence over the Ottoman Government than in making correct interpretations.

Seeing that the Christian churches had lost their influence after the separation of the Church from the State, the ulamas condemned the learning of non-religious subjects in the hope that those with such knowledge do not displace them, he said.

"As a result, Muslims who used to lead the world in the arts and sciences began to lag behind the non-Muslims."