

Four criteria must be met to become an ulama, says Jakim

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Islamic Development Department of Malaysia (Jakim) has listed four criteria on what constitutes a real ulama.

Its director-general Mohamad Shahir Abdullah said it hoped the explanation would clear the confusion on the status of ulamas in the country.

He said ulamas were learned and proficient in Islam, understood all books on the religion, able to teach each discipline of Islam in the correct method and fully dedicated to the causes of

the religion. He added that if any Muslim met all four criteria, then he should be entitled to be called an ulama.

"Those who are not proficient in Islam, do not understand religious books, cannot convey the teachings of Islam efficiently and do not have knowledge in *aqidah*, *syariat* or *akhlak* are therefore not real ulamas," he said.

He added that Jakim had to come out with the explanation because the issue had become a hot subject following a speech by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir

Mohamad at the recent World Economic Forum, where he covered a topic entitled "The Role of Islam in Modern Nations."

Certain quarters and Islamic groups had alleged that Dr Mahathir had insulted ulamas in the country.

Mohamad Shahir said what Dr Mahathir was trying to explain to the community was the existence of a group of ulamas who abused their positions for their own gains or the group's interest, when at the same time their positions as ulamas were questionable.