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US and European Muslim scholars for Mahathir Dialogue

SHAH ALAM, Fri. - Eighteen prominent scholars and representatives of the Muslim communities of North America and Europe will attend the Mahathir Dialogue on the Advancement of the Ummah on Wednesday at Cyberjaya.

The dialogue is organised by the Institute of Knowledge Advancement (InKA) of Universiti Teknologi Mara, together with the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations of the Prime Minister's Department.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will moderate the session.

Special Envoy of the Prime Minister Tan Sri Mohamed Khatib Abdul Hamid, who was involved in bringing the dialogue to reality, said the objective was to discuss ways to tackle issues of concern to Muslims after Sept 11.

He said the Western countries were invited because their scholars had proven that despite being part of the Muslim minority, they were well respected.

"With this dialogue, we could better assess the problems and thinking of the Muslims there.

"The meeting will help participants ascertain what could be done at the practical level to resolve some of these issues," he said at a Press conference today.

Mohamed Khatib said the dialogue also aimed to psychologically liberate Muslims and a plan of action would be formulated.

UiTM vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Ibrahim Abu Shah said given the negative perception of Islam among Western countries, it was necessary to rebuild confidence, understanding, trust and goodwill, and restore Islam's image as a progressive religion.

He said Malaysia was an appropriate forum as it had successfully built a contemporary Islamic community and transformed its multi-ethnic and religious society into a tolerant society.

The participants will attend three briefings on Tuesday by the Economic Planning Unit, UiTM's Professor Dr Shad Faruqi on democracy and governance, and Bank Negara on Islamic Financial System.

They will also hold a discussion with Umno leaders.