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'PM likely to touch on correcting misconceptions'

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech at the opening of the World Conference of Islamic Scholars is expected to touch on the need for the ulama to correct misconceptions about Islam among Muslims.

Religious adviser to the Prime Minister Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman said the speech would call on Islamic scholars to find ways to address misconceptions of the faith and work towards returning the understanding and practice of the religion to its fundamentals.

Dr Mahathir would also touch on the role of the ulama in Islamic history and how they helped build the Islamic civilisation, he said.

"The Prime Minister is expected to call on the world ulama to find solutions to the confusion plaguing Muslims today ...how they are now split and fighting each other, and how some of them have taken to accusing their brethren of being infidels," he said when met before the World Conference of Islamic Scholars.

Abdul Hamid said some of the conference speakers would be visiting the country to speak on unity and correct the misconceptions Muslims had of the religion.

Dr Rifat Sayyid Al-Iwadhi and Dr Fahmi Huwaidi, both from Egypt, will be speaking in the eastern zone which comprises Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Kuantan, on Saturday.

On the same day, Dr Zaki Badawi from London and Saleem Eid Mohamad Al-Hilali from Jordan will speak at Shangri-La Tanjung Aru Resort in Kota Kinabalu.

On Sunday, Dr Fathi Osman from the United States and Dr Ali Al-Shuaiby from Syria will speak at the Holiday Inn in Kuching.

Dr Zaki and Saleem will also give a talk in the southern region, which comprises Johor, Malacca and Negri Sembilan, on July 17 at the Eden Garden, Johor Baru.

Abdul Hamid said the proposed secretariat in Malaysia would direct academic research towards finding solutions to real world problems.

"We don't want aloof academics, but those who go to the ground to find the real problems of the Muslim world and offer real solutions," he said.