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`Quran should be interpreted by ulama who have interest of Muslims at

SHAH ALAM, Fri. - The Quran has to be interpreted by a group of Islamic religious scholars (ulama) who are not self-centred, but have the interest of Muslims and religion at heart, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This was necessary so that the Quran continued to be a reliable source of reference, he added.

He also said Islamic religious scholars should not be under the impression that they were the descendants of Prophet Muhammad and did not have any weaknesses like other human beings.

He was speaking at the launch of the Mushaf Malaysia Taba'ah' Ain At-Takwa Quran (compilation edition) at the Taman Seni Islam complex here.

Present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin.

Dr Mahathir said the disunity among Muslims was because of the differing and contradicting interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith by Islamic religious scholars, and not because of the teachings of Islam.

"There is nothing wrong with the Quran. But the interpreters, who are only human even though learned with in-depth knowledge of Islam, may still make inaccurate interpretations."

He said these arrogant interpreters, who claimed that only they were knowledgeable in Islam and the interpretation of the Quran while the teachings of others were incorrect and that they should never be criticised, had frequently been the cause of Muslims being confused, misled and divided. "Even though learned, they need not necessarily be correct and accurate."

He said the Quran was a guidance in life. "When we are confused or are lost or not at peace or feel not safe, we refer to the Quran. But if the Quran had been interpreted differently our reference could be wrong because we are referring to the interpreter and not the Quran."

He said there were also people who were against opinions which differed with the traditional interpretation done a long time ago. "They accuse it as attempts to change the Quran, but that is not the case. The Quran cannot be changed. "What has to be done are amendments to the interpretations to suit current times," he said.