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PM: Remark unfair to both Abdullah and me

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today described Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor's remark that the Deputy Prime Minister was in charge of pigs as an insult to both Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and himself.

He said that while Fadzil had said that he was merely stating a fact, the accusation was wrong and unfair to "both Abdullah and me".

"I appointed Abdullah to co-ordinate work among all ministries involved in preventing the spread of the viral encephalitis outbreak.

"To prevent the spread, various measures have to be taken including the culling of pigs. We also have to kill the mosquitoes.

"Abdullah's task is, therefore, to ensure the health and safety of the public. It is not a fact that he was appointed to be in charge of pigs.

"If it is a fact that Abdullah is in charge of pigs, then it means that I appointed him to such a role.

"It is not fair to accuse him as such and it is also not fair to me as I was the one who appointed him. It is an insult," Dr Mahathir told reporters after visiting the Islamic Arts Museum today to view an exhibition entitled "Reflections of an Ideal World: Islamic Carpets From Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait".

Fadzil was reported as having said that while in the Arab Peninsula the Badwi (Bedouins) were associated with the care of goats and camels, the "Badwi" in Malaysia was taking care of pigs.

The remarks were made in a speech at former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's house in Cherok Tok Kun on March 29.

Fadzil later said that he was only stating a fact when he made the remarks and that it was not intended to humiliate Abdullah or his family.

On the Kosovo crisis, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was willing to extend assistance but "our capability to do so is limited.

"We need effective weapons, for instance".

He said Serb atrocities could only be stopped if ground forces were despatched to protect the remaining ethnic Albanians.

"If the so-called world leader is afraid to send in troops for fear that its own people will be killed, then it should not call itself a world leader.

"If it is only willing to lob bombs from afar for fear that its own people will be killed, then do not go to war in the first place.

"In Iraq, for instance, the world leader's hatred for Saddam Hussein resulted in the whole of Iraq being tormented."

On attempts to revive the banned al-Arqam movement, Dr Mahathir said: "Investigations are being carried out. There are those interested only in promoting their own interests, and not the interests of the religion.

"They want to become leaders by misusing Islam. That is wrong."

It was reported today that there have been attempts over the past three months to revive the movement, banned since August 1994, by its former members, including those previously detained in the past under the Internal Security Act.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman had said that one of those involved in the current attempt was its former leader Asaari Muhammad.

The exhibition showcases 14 carpets from the Al-Sabah collection in Kuwait displaying Islamic weaving traditions of Anatolia, Transcaucasia,

Iran, India and Egypt.

Many of the exhibits were woven during the time of the Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal and Mamluk empires.

They demonstrate both Islamic piety and imperial pride in their colours, designs and combination of religious and royal symbols."

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