

# Fadzil's criticism against Dr M aimed at creating rift

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat.— Pas' criticism of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech at the World Economic Forum in New York last week seems to be an attempt at creating a rift between religious scholars and the Umno Government leadership.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Pas president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor had criticised the Prime Minister for delivering a speech which "judged the *ulama*".

Fadzil was quoted as saying the speech was both "nauseating and embarrassing" in a *Harakah* issue of Feb 16 to 28.

Abdullah, speaking after opening a course for Umno Orators, organised by the Umno Information Bureau at the party headquarters today, said Dr Mahathir, who is also

Umno president, had never regarded the *ulama* as enemies.

He said the Prime Minister had on many occasions held discussions with them on social and educational development issues of the community.

"These discussions are held with *ulama* who may or may not be Umno members.

"They are called for open and honest discussions without any political agenda."

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir was dismayed to find that there were some *ulama* who had used Islamic teachings to issue fatwa for political gains.

"Dr Mahathir said the existence of these 'political *ulama*' will only cause Islamic countries to suffer and fail to progress, benefiting no one," Abdullah added.