

'PM's speech at WEF not critical of ulama'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat: PAS president Datuk Fadzil Noor is wrong in saying that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had shamed ulama in his speech at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in New York recently.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the prime minister's speech was not meant to create a rift between ulama and the government and Umno leaders.

"The prime minister has never wanted to make enemies with ulama," he told reporters after opening an Umno information bureau course here today.

Fadzil, in the Feb 16 to 26 issue of PAS organ, *Harakah*, said Mahathir "had shamed himself and the Muslim community by making his speech before VIPs, which included

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, at the economic summit."

Abdullah, who is Umno deputy president, said Mahathir indulges in discussions with ulama on issues concerning the community without taking into account their political leanings.

"The prime minister only said he was disappointed with certain ulama for using Islam for their own political agendas.

"They went to the extent of issuing *fatwa* resulting in a rift among the Muslim community in the country," he said.

Abdullah said Mahathir had pointed out at the meeting that the problem was faced by Muslim countries and had hampered their development.

He said all good ulama will continue to be appreciated and respected by the Muslim community.