

National Ulama Consultative Council to be set up

By Ramlan Said
ramlans@nstp.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — A National Ulama Consultative Council will be established soon to provide a platform for discussing issues and conflicts affecting the community.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today the council, proposed by the Umno supreme council at its meeting last Friday, would not compete with or usurp the functions of the National Fatwa Council.

Instead, it would serve as an avenue for *ulama* to debate and search for solutions to issues affecting Muslims and the country.

"The details have not been finalised but generally, the council will invite eminent and credible scholars and those with expertise in certain fields to sit as members," he said after distributing Hari Raya Haji meat at Sultan Suleiman Club.

The event, which saw 26 head of cattle slaughtered, was organised by the Kampung Baru branch of the Malaysian Islamic Missionary and Welfare Organisation.

Abdullah, who is party deputy president, said Umno proposed the setting up of the council as it had always held *ulama* in high esteem, besides realising the need for their role to be institutionalised.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would be informed about the proposed council upon his return from overseas.

Abdullah said critics who labelled Umno and Dr Mahathir as anti-*ulama* did so out of ignorance on the close ties between the party and *ulama*.

"The supreme council discussed allegations that Umno and Dr Mahathir are anti-*ulama*. These are baseless and extreme.

"The party and its leaders are appreciative of the role of *ulama* and have always sought their views on issues affecting the religion. This has always been the approach adopted by Umno."

Asked whether *ulama* aligned to Opposition parties would be invited to join, Abdullah said all those willing to contribute would be roped in.

"But we do not want *ulama* who will feel restricted in airing their views objectively because of political beliefs,"

□ TURN TOP PAGE 2 COL 4

Sacrifice should be aimed only at preserving peace, says DPM

□ FROM PAGE ONE

On whether the recent controversy on the role of *ulama* could cause a split among Muslims, Abdullah replied: "I do not think the situation has gone out of hand, but if nothing is done, it can deteriorate."

In his speech earlier, Abdullah said Muslims in the country must ensure their sacrifices for the betterment of the community and religion were not misinterpreted as a

struggle associated with violence.

He said the sacrifice and struggle should be aimed at preserving peace and attaining progress.

"There are many ways like the struggle to eradicate poverty and overcoming the various social ills affecting our younger generation.

"But before success is achieved, sacrifices in terms of energy, time and money have to be made. Those with specific skills and knowledge should also play their role."