

Variety of experts for ulama council

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PENANG, Sat. — Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today Muslim experts in the various disciplines would be invited to be members of the proposed National Ulama Consultative Council.

He said they would serve as expert consultants on cases that required their expertise to resolve.

"We will invite experts in the field of sociology and scientists, among others, so that they can share their knowledge and experience with other members of the council," he said.

"This way, we can resolve any issues affecting the community effectively."

Citing an example, he said Royal Prof Ungku Aziz had consulted a University Al-Azhar scholar before setting up the Tabung Haji.

"Ungku Aziz is an economist, but he had consulted an expert on various *syariah* laws and both of them have contributed in their own ways to the successful setting up of Tabung Haji.

"This shows the importance in

including experts in other disciplines as members of the council so that any issues affecting the community can be addressed and resolved effectively," he said.

Abdullah said this to reporters after attending a Hari Raya open house organised by the Muslim League here.

Gracing the event was Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas, who was accompanied by his wife, Toh Puan Majimor Shariff.

Also present were former Penang Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Muslim League president Datuk Shaik Allaudin Ismail.

Abdullah was asked on the progress of the setting up of the council, mooted as a recognition of the local ulamas' contributions to the country and to include them in nation building.

He said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Brig-Jen (Rtd) Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin has been tasked to identify the possible members of the pro-

posed council.

"Once this is done, we will submit the list of names to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad," he said.

Asked if members of the Persatuan Ulamak Malaysia would be invited as members of the council, he said there were no plans to invite anyone from any associations.

"If the person is an expert in a certain field and he happens to be a member of a certain association, then so be it.

"If the person attends the meeting, he does so because he is an expert in a certain field," Abdullah added.

Asked on the Barisan Nasional's preparation for the Ketari State by-election, he said Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob had been appointed as its director of operations and that Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib would assist him as he had assisted Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim in the Indera Kayangan by-election in January.