

27/09/2002

Abdullah: Pas spiritual leader should apologise

BANTING, Thurs. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Pas spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat should apologise for saying that the Prime Minister did not know how to recite the Quran.

"If a mistake has been made, one must apologise. That is what is usually done. In this case, it was a serious allegation which can adversely affect the reputation of a Muslim leader.

"Now that Nik Aziz has admitted his mistake, he must explain to the people," Abdullah said after the prize-giving ceremony of the national-level Desa Cemerlang competition at Kampung Batu Laut, near here.

He agreed to a suggestion that since Nik Aziz made the allegation at a ceramah, his retraction should also be made at a similar forum.

Nik Aziz said yesterday it was a slip of the tongue which made him say that Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had admitted to not knowing how to recite the Quran.

He said what he had wanted to say was that Dr Mahathir did not know Arabic. Speaking after chairing the State Executive Council meeting on Wednesday, Nik Aziz, who is Kelantan Menteri Besar, had said: "It was a slip of the tongue. I thought of something else but something else came out of my mouth. Today, I want to correct what I have said, from the Prime Minister not knowing how to recite the Quran to not knowing Arabic."

On Sunday, businessman Mohd Zain Yassim, 37, lodged a report at the Bachok police station against Nik Aziz for his remarks accusing Dr Mahathir of not knowing how to recite the Quran.

Abdullah did not dismiss the possibility that Nik Aziz's statement was made deliberately, and only later acknowledged as a mistake.