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Abdullah-Ulama

PAS HITS OUT AT PM'S SPEECH TO CREATE DISPUTES, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 9 (Bernama) -- The PAS criticism of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech at the World Economic Forum in New York last week was merely aimed at creating disputes between the ulamas and government and Umno leaders, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He said the Prime Minister had never considered the ulamas as enemies or adverseries.

"Ustaz Fadzil Noor (PAS president) had criticised Dr Mahathir saying that the Prime Minister had delivered a speech in New York which berated the ulamas," he told reporters after opening the Course for Umno Orators organised by the Umno Information Bureau at the party's headquarters, here today.

"PAS wants to raise the issue once again. It appears that they have an intention or objective to create a division or dispute between the ulamas and Umno and government leaders," said Abdullah who is also Umno deputy president.

He was commenting on a report entitled "PAS Hits Out At PM For Berating Ulamas In Front Of Ariel Sharon" in the Harakah, the PAS news bulletin, in its latest issue dated Feb 16-28.

In the article, Fadzil was quoted as saying Dr Mahathir's speech was "most nauseating and had shamed him and Muslims all over the world when it was delivered in front of a majority of non-Muslims at the World Economic Forum."

Abdullah said the Prime Minister had frequent discussions with ulamas at the Prime Minister's Department to seek their views especially in handling social issues and Islamic education.

"It's not inviting Umno ulamas but ulamas who are not Umno members to have sincere discussions without any political stand or agenda in the discussions. It's very helpful..." he said.

Abdullah said what the Prime Minister had stated at the forum was the existence of political ulamas who were prepared to issue edicts or make their own interpretations to the extent of causing disputes, confusion and quarrels among Muslims for political gain.

The views expressed did not bring benefits and in general, Dr Mahathir said the existence of such political ulamas was hindering Muslim countries from progressing, he said.

"This was what the Prime Minister said and not branding all ulamas as bad, except for such groups (of political ulamas) only," he said.

Abdullah hoped the rakyat especially the ulama groups could appreciate Dr Mahathir's views and it was not the Prime Minister's intention to go against the ulamas.

"The good ulamas who are truly pious and can contribute to the progress of the community will always be respected and this has been the attitude of Umno all this while," he said.

On the 'quarrel' between the Malaysian Ulama Association (PUM) and the writers of religious articles who were accused by PUM as humiliating Islam, Abdullah said it was a serious allegation because Islam encouraged the exchange of ideas on matters pertaining to Islam, the future, problems and position of Islam.

"We must adopt the attitude that if the views expressed happen to criticise the ulamas, it should not be construed as humiliating Islam and humiliating ulamas directly," he said.

Abdullah said there were no ulamas who were always right in all matters that their mistakes could not be pointed out.

He said there should be discussions and dialogues so that any differences which could jeopardise Muslims could be resolved.

The PUM recently sent a protest to the Council of Rulers as they claimed a group of writers of religious articles had deviated and their articles were humiliating Islam.

Sisters in Islam executive director Zainah Anwar, Kassim Ahmad, Akbar Ali and Farish A. Noor were among the writers included in the protest.

-- BERNAMA

HS AZZ AO