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LID-Closing

ABDULLAH TO ESPOUSE SMART PARTNERSHIP IN HIS OWN WAY

By Umi hani Sharani & Rosyatimah Tukimin

LANGKAWI, July 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi, who paid tribute to former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

for initiating the Langkawi International Dialogue (LID), says that he will

espouse the Smart Partnership movement in his own way.

At the start of his speech of the closing dinner here tonight, he said

many of the smart partners had been used to Dr Mahathir's ways and that he

did not know whether they would be familiar with his (Abdullah's) ways.

He recalled an incident when someone asked him not too long after having taken over from Dr Mahathir on how he felt about wearing Dr Mahathir's shoes.

Abdullah said he was reminded that "they are big shoes."

He added, "I thought for a while and told him that I would not wear his shoes. I will wear my shoes and wear my shoes comfortably."

About 300 leaders and participants from 33 countries attended the dinner including King Mswati III of Swaziland, the host patron of the 2003 Southern African International Dialogue.

This year's LID had a new feature which included a business, investment and trade showcase as well as business matchmaking sessions aimed at fostering business ventures and networking between Malaysian and African companies.

Abdullah thanked all smart partners, including all heads of states and governments, for providing valuable inputs and ideas to make the seventh edition of the LID a resounding success.

Initially he said he had doubts whether this year's LID would be a success, but "people around me contributed many ideas for which I'm very grateful."

He hoped that all the smart leaders and participants would gather together next year in the mountainous and landlocked kingdom of Lesotho to

move the smart partnership movement even further.

The LID, which started in 1995, has spawned similar dialogues in Southern and Eastern Africa as well as in the Caribbean. -- BERNAMA

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