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Abdullah: Malaysia to continue Dialogue with African countries

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - Malaysia will continue the Smart Partnership Movement Dialogue (Langkawi International Dialogue) with African nations, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

The Prime Minister gave an assurance that the change in the country's leadership would not affect the annual gathering as the Government was committed to ensuring its continued success.

"There have been many questions as to whether I would continue with the initiative after taking over from (former Prime Minister) Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. I'm fully committed to this initiative which has paved the way for us to discuss and determine our way forward.

"All our past dialogues have been successful in their own way, I hope this year's dialogue will be equally successful. This is not something alien to me as I have actively participated in past dialogues," Abdullah said.

He was speaking at a joint Press conference with King Mswati III of Swaziland after the media launch of Global 2004-Langkawi (Smart Partnership Dialogue) at the Shangrila Hotel here.

Global 2004 will be held in Langkawi from July 29 to 31 with the theme "Towards a Smarter Globe".

Abdullah said Global 2004 would re-visit issues aimed at reducing poverty, address health concerns with special emphasis on fighting HIV/AIDS and discuss challenges faced by smaller nations.

The Smart Partnership Dialogue, initiated by Dr Mahathir in 1995, is aimed at promoting a win-win situation for all participants in charting the future of their society and nation.

Some 800 Government leaders, policy makers, media practitioners and corporate leaders are expected to take part in Global 2004.

The dialogue has been held in alternate years in Langkawi with selected nations from Africa attending.

Global 2003 was hosted by Swaziland in Ezulwini and today King Mswati officially handed the baton back to Malaysia for Global 2004.

In his brief remarks at the Press conference, King Mswati thanked Abdullah for his commitment, saying that the smart partnership movement owed its existence to Malaysia.

"It was through Malaysia's innovative leadership that the concept of the win-win principle, through interactive and inclusive dialogue, has spread to many corners of the world.

"My tenure as the chairman of the movement has helped to strengthen my personal belief in the principles of smart partnership. I am, more than ever, convinced of the relevance of this philosophy in problem resolution and the development of our nations," he said.

King Mswati, who had earlier held discussions with Abdullah, said Africa has embraced the concept of smart partnership and was slowly reaping the benefits in terms of trade and business links through greater networking.

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