

11/11/2003

Australia sees better ties with Abdullah at the helm

MIRI, Mon. - Australia is optimistic that diplomatic and bilateral ties with Malaysia will be less cantankerous under the new Malaysian administration.

Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia James Wise said Australia was looking forward to better diplomatic and bilateral ties with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the helm.

He said Australia expected co-operation in education and trade to improve further under Abdullah.

"Abdullah is held in high esteem in Australia. He is a no stranger to the Australian people," he said after visiting Curtin University of Technology, Sarawak campus in Senadin, near here, today.

Malaysia and Australia enjoys cordial relations but bilateral ties between both nations were at the lowest point after former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating called former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad "recalcitrant" when the latter refused to attend the first Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit in Jakarta in 1991.

Dr Mahathir recently chided Australia for playing the role of "deputy sheriff" to the United States in the region, describing Australia as "some sort of transplant" in the region.