

Six-day visit to Sudan, Kenya, Namibia
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today kicked off a six-day visit to three countries in Africa beginning with Sudan.

Abdullah will meet Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir on Monday to discuss issues of mutual interest including trade and investment to strengthen bilateral ties, a statement from the foreign ministry said.

"Other regional and international issues such as the Middle East are expected to feature in the discussions as well," it said.

Abdullah is also scheduled to visit Kenya on April 18 and Namibia on April 20-21 and will meet leaders of both countries to discuss political developments in Africa.

Human rights abuses

International rights group Amnesty International Malaysia on Saturday called on Abdullah to raise the issue of human rights violations and the ongoing tragedy of Darfur during his meeting in the Sudan.

The group said Abdullah, as current chairman of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference "has an obligatory responsibility" to call on the Sudanese government to cease international human rights and humanitarian law violations.

"Otherwise... we will fail in our duty as a member of the international and Islamic community with cost to human lives," AIM said.

Violence has steadily escalated in Darfur since conflict erupted in 2003. The United Nations estimates that at least 200,000 people have been killed.

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