

Abdullah: Let's go for real growth

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BY CHOI TUCK WO

VALLETTE (Malta): Malaysia has pressed for concrete action to implement capacity building programmes to help developing countries within the Commonwealth.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said there had been much talk on such programmes but no clear plan to implement them.

"Don't just talk. Let's have a concrete plan to make them a reality," he told Malaysian journalists after attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) retreat on Friday.

The 53 heads of government will continue with their informal discussions over the next two days before issuing a communiqué later today.

Abdullah urged developed countries within the Commonwealth to implement the programmes through the grouping's secretariat.

Such an initiative, he added, could benefit developing countries as it was

related towards the development of skilled manpower, acquiring knowledge especially in science and technology and the transfer of technology.

Abdullah said that during the meeting, the leaders expressed their views towards trade liberalisation and its effects on developing countries.

He said British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who is also the European Union president, took the opportunity to explain and defend the issue of high farming subsidies.

As such subsidies could not be provided forever, developing countries must have their own programmes to boost their capacity and efficiency for higher yields, Abdullah explained.

Abdullah said Malaysia had proposed that the Commonwealth Secretariat continues with its efforts to help the Pakistani government achieve full democratic reforms.

On Fiji, he said the leaders felt that it could take part in CHOGM and should not come under the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) on



ANTIPODEAN TOUCH: Abdullah greeting Clark ahead of their meeting on Friday at the sidelines of the CHOGM retreat in Malta. — *Bernamapic*

the Ha'are Declaration.

He added that Malaysia also supported a proposal to review the CMAG membership and hoped to rejoin the group's committee.

As for the draft communique, the Prime Minister said the leaders had decided against approving the document at an early stage, turning their discussions instead onto more pressing matters.

Among these issues were those related to trade, terrorism and religious tolerance, he said, adding that the communique would only be dis-

cussed at a special executive session at the end of the retreat.

Abdullah said he also held talks with his New Zealand counterpart Helen Clark. They spoke about preparations for the East Asian Summit in Kuala Lumpur next month.

He also met Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz who took the opportunity to thank Malaysia for extending donations in cash and kind to the country's Oct 8 earthquake victims.



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