

PM: Muslim nations must check corruption

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BALI: Malaysia made a strong statement against corruption at an international summit here, saying that Muslim nations will not be able to achieve their full economic potential if they do not address the problem.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said fighting corruption was one of the most fundamental issues pertaining to good governance.

"Corruption must be eradicated in the management of our respective economies as it only benefits a few at the expense of many.

"Corruption disrupts the entire governmental process, undermines morality and erodes ethical behaviour," he said at the fifth Developing Eight (D8) Summit yesterday.

The Prime Minister said as contribution to the campaign against corruption, Malaysia would be holding a forum on anti-corruption and enhancing integrity initiatives exclusively for the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation countries in August.

"Invitations have been sent out and I look forward to active participation from D8 members," he added.

Among the heads of D8 countries present were Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, Nigerian President Olesegun Obasanjo and



PACT SIGNED: (from left) Aziz, Abdullah, Ahmadinejad, Susilo, Erdogan and Obasanjo witnessing the signing of the D8 MoU yesterday. — *Reuterspic*

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"Egypt and Bangladesh were represented by their senior ministers.

Abdullah said Muslim nations should not neglect their culture and traditions in their quest for economic prosperity.

"We must return to the true teachings of Islam which preach peace, justice and compassion. We must continuously strive to foster the noble values

and ideals of Islam, progressively and holistically," he added.

In this context, he said Malaysia had introduced Islam Hadhari, to achieve a progressive community that was compatible with modern times and yet, firmly rooted in the noble values of Islam.

"Islam Hadhari is a comprehensive approach for the development of mankind, society and country, based on the per-

spective of Islamic teachings and Islamic civilisation."

Among others, the Prime Minister also touched on the need to eradicate poverty in Islamic countries where half the population live on less than RM7 a day; the need for D8 countries to improve on the current "uninspiring" trade volume among them; and Malaysia's *halal* hub programme for the production and distribution of *halal* products and services to

tap an estimated RM3bil (US\$580mil) a year market worldwide.

The member countries later signed two agreements — offer of tariff concessions for trade, and administrative assistance in Customs matters, to increase multi-lateral trade.

Malaysia is scheduled to host the next summit in 2008.