

Unity the key in global Muslim revival, says PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Muslims have to renew their spirit of unity as a first step to playing a wider and more active role in the era of globalisation, the prime minister said.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said unity was among four important imperatives for Islamic nations to reclaim the religion's golden era and make an impact in today's world.

He said the others were to revive the economic position of Muslim nations; invest in education and skills; and establish social justice based on Islamic principles.

Abdullah said the four imperatives must be pursued within a cohesive Islamic framework that promotes a proper appreciation of Islam as a force for progress and development.

"This approach may be found in the principles of Islam Hadhari, which I had introduced in Malaysia and promoted globally.

"By adopting the *manhaj* or approach of Islam Hadhari, I believe we can help to renew the spirit and vigour of Islamic states, producing a Muslim ummah that is at home in the modern world yet firmly rooted in the *aqidah* of Islam. Only then can Islamic states begin to reclaim their legacy as active players in the global arena," he said in a speech at the International Conference on The Role of Islamic States in a Globalised World.

The speech was read by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak. Najib also launched a book entitled *The Ijazah of Abdullah Fahim*, written by Mesut Idris and Syed Ali Tawfik Al-Attas.

Abdullah described the global challenge for Muslims today as "tremendous".

However, playing the role of a global player is not new to Muslims.

"We have played that very role, centuries ago.

"And I believe we have it within ourselves to play an active role in a globalised world once more."

Touching on the need to reunite Muslims, Abdullah said while Islam was a global faith that bound many races together, there were instances when its interpretation pitted people against one another.

"We need to renew our understanding of Islam. We must emphasise our common



Datuk Seri Najib Razak meeting participants at the International Conference on The Role of Islamic States in a Globalised World yesterday. — NST picture by Salim Shaari

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Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

heritage and put aside any sectarian differences which can lead to division and conflict.

"Ultimately, we must move beyond politics and conflict, and focus on issues that are of immediate concern: Tackling poverty, eliminating illiteracy, combating ignorance and raising the quality of life," he said.

On the revival of the economies of Muslim nations, Abdullah said since Malaysia took over the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) chairmanship, various efforts had been undertaken to promote global Muslim economy.

Citing an example, the prime minister said the World Economic Forum was held in 2005 to promote economic

links and entrepreneurship within the Muslim ummah, particularly among women and young leaders.

To invest in education and skills, Abdullah said there was a need to build a knowledgeable society — an "Ulul Al Bab" community — in which real and true knowledge was the governing principle of all human activity.

He said it was obvious that the Muslim world lacked high-quality universities, libraries, resource centres and laboratories.

"We must be willing to invest towards educating the next generation of great scholars.

"Of the great scholars we already have today, we must honour them and their contributions.

"We must build a generation of Muslims that recognises and honours knowledge. This is the way of success," he said.

Elaborating on the need to establish social justice based on Islamic principles, Abdullah said it was imperative to liberate human capabilities to ensure all citizens can participate in governance.

"Social justice also demands that we combat corruption. It would be impossible to achieve genuine development within the framework of corrupt governance."

He said Islamic states must be ready to engage with the wider world and take advantage of the many opportunities offered by globalisation.