

THE STAR

Strengthen bilateral ties

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PM calls for more collaboration between KL and Wellington

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has always viewed New Zealand as a valued and long-standing partner in many areas of cooperation, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He said these included not only security and defence but also education, human capital development, science and technology as well as trade and investment.

In this context, Abdullah said he was very encouraged to note that the latest figures for bilateral trade and investment between the two countries had shown increases compared with previous years.

"However, I must quickly add that there is still a lot of room for improvement in both cases," he said in his speech at the official dinner he hosted in honour of his New Zealand counterpart Helen Clark here last night.

Clark arrived here last Saturday for her official visit to Malaysia.

Abdullah said that cooperation in the field of education was one area where Kuala Lumpur wished to see an expansion, adding that both countries already had in place a good framework for accomplishing the objective.

"Malaysia wishes to see the cooperation in the area of education expanded not only at the level of learning but also at the level of teaching," he added.

Abdullah also highlighted the need for greater collaboration between Kuala Lumpur and Wellington in the field of agriculture and agro-business.

"Our thrust in the development of agriculture is the enhancement of the value chain, the cultivation of high value-added agricultural activities and the development of large scale commercial farming, utilising ICT as well as exploiting the full potential of biotechnology," he said.

Abdullah invited New Zealand companies to establish joint ventures and collaborations with Malaysian companies, universities and venture capital firms in the development of the biotechnology industry.

In his speech, Abdullah also expressed Malaysia's appreciation for New Zealand's contribution to the peace and stability of South-East Asia.

While recognising New Zealand's support for Asean and Asean-related activities, Abdullah said Malaysia also valued New Zealand's active participation in regional strategic frameworks, particularly in the Asean Regional Forum and in the East Asia Summit process.

"Your visit here is very important because it serves to reflect the close and friendly relations that exist between Malaysia and New Zealand," Abdullah said. — Bernama



Warm greetings: Abdullah receiving Clark at the Prime Minister's office in Putrajaya yesterday. — Bernama