

Play active role in the world, Pak Lah tells Muslim countries

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KUALA LUMPUR: Muslim countries cannot remain mere spectators but need to seek a more active role in the world that is rapidly moving ahead.

In giving Muslim states a wake-up call, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday outlined four imperatives for Islamic states to reclaim the golden legacy of the Islamic era.

"We must commit ourselves to enhancing our competitiveness in order to play a contributing role to the advancement of human civilisation," he said.

In his address at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia's (Ikim) international conference on "Role of Islamic States in a Globalised World" here, Abdullah said Muslim states should:

» renew the spirit of unity among Muslims;

» revive their economic position;

» invest in education and skills, and building a knowledgeable society; and

» establish social justice based on timeless Islamic principles.

In his speech, delivered by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, Abdullah said Islam is a global faith that binds many people the world over in a common bond.

"And yet, we find ourselves pitted against each other; Sunnis against Shi'ites, liberals against fundamentals and, most tragically, even the Palestinians against Palestinians."

In this context, he said, Muslims must also renew their understanding of Islam and put aside any sectarian differences which could lead to division and conflict among them.

"Ultimately, we must begin to move beyond politics and conflict, and focus on the issues that truly concern us as an *ummah* – tackling poverty, eliminating illiteracy, combating ignorance and raising the quality of life," he said.

Abdullah, who is the current chairman of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), asked how Muslim countries were going to account for the fact that despite being so blessed with natural resources, they largely remain poor and backward.

As it stands, the Muslims' share of the global economy is poor, Abdullah lamented.