

Malaysia willing to assist Afghanistan

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PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia is willing to share its experience to transform Afghanistan.

This includes making the private sector in Afghanistan contribute more to development.

In making the offer, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Afghanistan could draw lessons from Malaysia and decide what was best for it.

Just like Malaysia, he said, Afghanistan could shift from an agriculture-based economy to a labour-intensive manufacturing one before eventually moving to high-technology as well as skills and a capital-intensive manufacturing economy.

Abdullah said this via a video conferencing linking Putrajaya

and Kabul where the "Enabling Environment Conference — Effective Private Sector Contribution to Development of Afghanistan" conference was held.

He said since agriculture was currently the biggest provider of employment, it would be logical to reinvigorate the war-ravaged agricultural sector in Afghanistan.

He said Malaysia would expand its co-operation with Afghanistan and provide places for trainees from the country under the Malaysian Technical Co-operation Programme.

"We can focus on training modules which have relevance to the question of modernising the agricultural sector in that country."

He noted that Malaysia had considerable experience in the development of small- and medium-scale enterprises and would be ready to share this knowledge with the central Asian country.

"It should be possible for Afghanistan to find for itself a niche in the international market place, especially for niche products such as hand-woven carpets," he added.

Pointing out that mineral deposits represented another potential source of wealth for Afghanistan, he said that an enabling environment was certainly needed before foreign entrepreneurs could invest in the mining sector.

He said the development model

adopted by Malaysia was based on a philosophy of growth with equity or, more specifically, growth with equitable distribution.

"This is particularly crucial for a heterogeneous society like Malaysia.

"And we've made Islam a unifying rather than a dividing factor among our multi-religious population," he said.

Abdullah said that a continuing challenge for Malaysia was to ensure an equitable distribution of the country's wealth as economic disparities continued to exist among the people.

"This challenge is not unique to Malaysia, and it certainly applies to Afghanistan as well." — Bernama