

# PM urges ulama to work with political leaders

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**BANGI:** The prime minister yesterday urged ulama to keep working with political leaders in the same spirit of progress and unity that has lasted since independence.

Recounting the role of ulama over the past half-century, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told a gathering of the country's imam that religious and national leaders should continue to "advise and remind each other" of what was good for the nation.

"My grandfather, who was an ulama, had told the first prime minister of the need to unite the three main races, Malay, Chinese and Indian, as failure to do so would cause the Indians and Chinese to support the British.

"The British had assumed that Malaysia would be a failed state with a failed leadership when it became independent.

"It did not happen because of ulama's help.

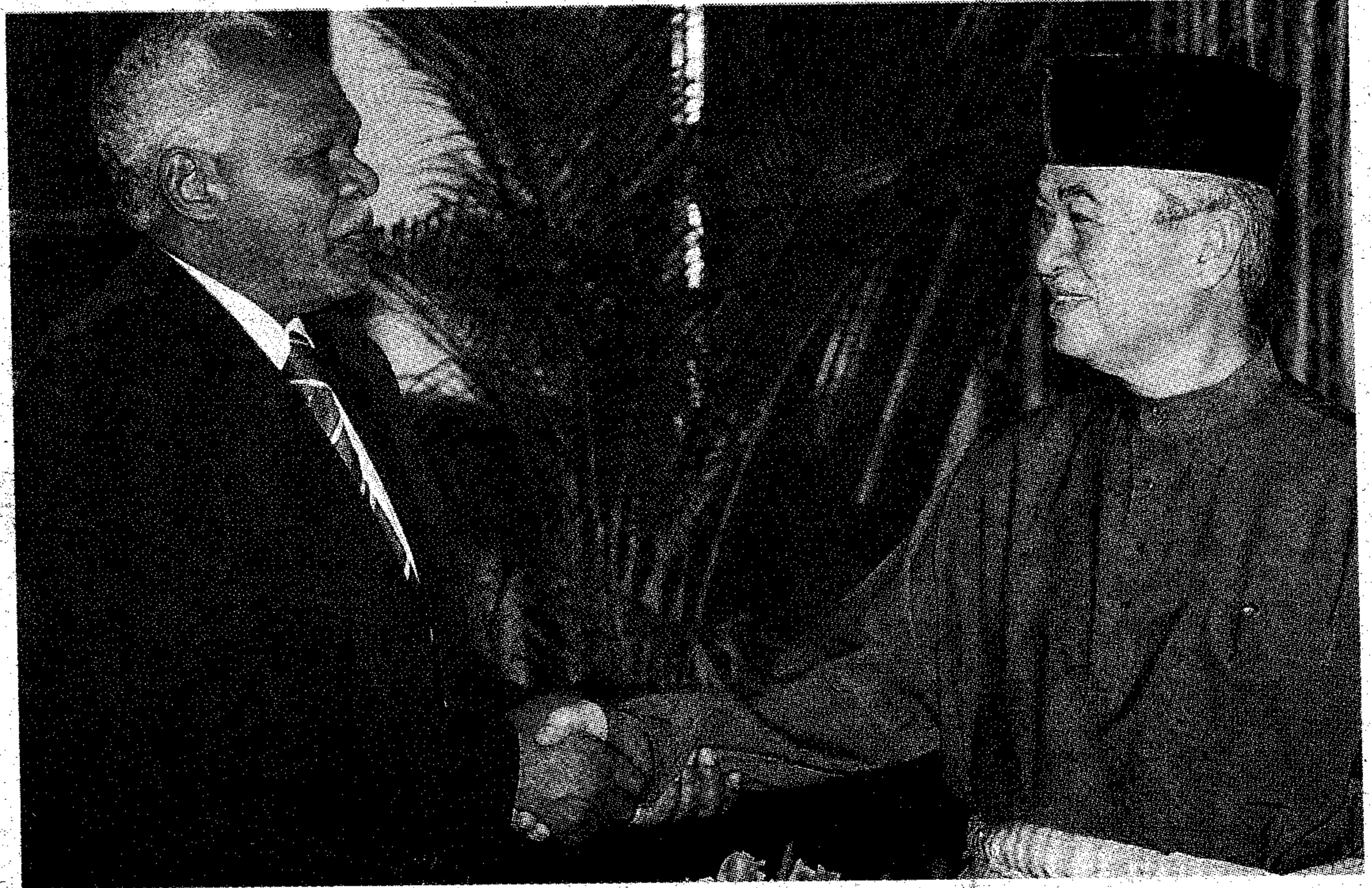
"Look at the formation of Tabung Haji.

"It is a successful institution today following lengthy discussions on its establishment between academic Royal Professor Ungku Aziz (on behalf of the government) and an ulama," he said.

Earlier, the prime minister launched the 2007 National Imam Conference at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, attended by about 3,900 imam from mosques nationwide.

In his speech, Abdullah said Friday sermons should not be abused for political purposes.

"Sermons should be about human capital development and progress," he said.



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (right) meeting Sudan's Oil Minister Awad Ahmed al-Jaz in Putrajaya yesterday. — Bernama picture

He added that imam could serve as agents for the betterment of society.

He rebuked those who continued to question Islam Hadhari when the concept of civilisational Islam had been well received by other Muslim and Western countries.

"It's not a new religion or a new sect. It serves as a guideline, which is within the scope of our religion, for us to follow to build up our capabilities in many fields," he said.

Abdullah also reported on Petronas' investments in Sudan, for which the Muslim-majority

country had expressed satisfaction.

The appreciation was conveyed by Sudanese Oil Minister Awad Ahmed al-Jaz, when he called on Abdullah yesterday.

The minister was here for the Asia Oil and Gas conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Petronas, the national oil corporation, is one of the largest investors in Sudan's oil and gas sector.

Abdullah, who is also finance minister, said Petronas had discharged its social responsibilities, including providing scholarships for Sudanese students to study at

Universiti Petronas.

He said Darfur, where thousands of people have been displaced by conflict, was discussed at the meeting with Awad.

The Malaysian government, he said, would help with the resettlement of the Darfur refugees.

Abdullah was also asked on the appointment of the chief judge of Malaya, a position that has been vacant since January with the retirement of Tan Sri Siti Norma Yaakob.

"The names have been sent by way of circulation and we are waiting for the reply. We will proceed from there," he said.