

Tackling the challenges facing Muslims

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Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi
Prime Minister

KUALA LUMPUR: Knowledge and the grace of God have helped Muslims in Malaysia succeed over the past 50 years compared to many of their fellow believers, the prime minister said.

"The three biggest challenges facing the Muslim world today are poverty, backwardness and ignorance.

"For a Muslim, education is a must. But what is happening today? Many of the poor nations are Muslim nations. And what about conflict zones? Many areas where there are conflicts are Muslim areas.

"The world of Islam is in trouble. We need to take whatever steps are necessary to change this," Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said at the launch of Dewan Amal Islami, a body charged with the development of Muslims, at the Putra World Trade Centre.

The first of those steps was education, a priority for Malaysia as chair of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

"Without it, we would not have scientists, entrepreneurs, businessmen and academics. These people will bring even more change. It is because of this that we have become a Muslim nation known the world over," he said.

The prime minister attributed Malaysia's progress to moderation, mutual respect and tolerance among the various races and religions.

By the same token, Abdullah said Muslims needed to work together instead of allowing differences to degenerate into sectarian violence, such as that between the Sunni and Shia in Iraq.