

Focus on poverty, Muslims told

Abdullah: Set aside sectarian beliefs

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DAVOS (Switzerland): Tackle the threats of poverty, backwardness and illiteracy and set aside sectarian beliefs, Malaysia tells the Muslim world.

Muslims worldwide must cooperate and resolve these problems rather than project their sectarian beliefs, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

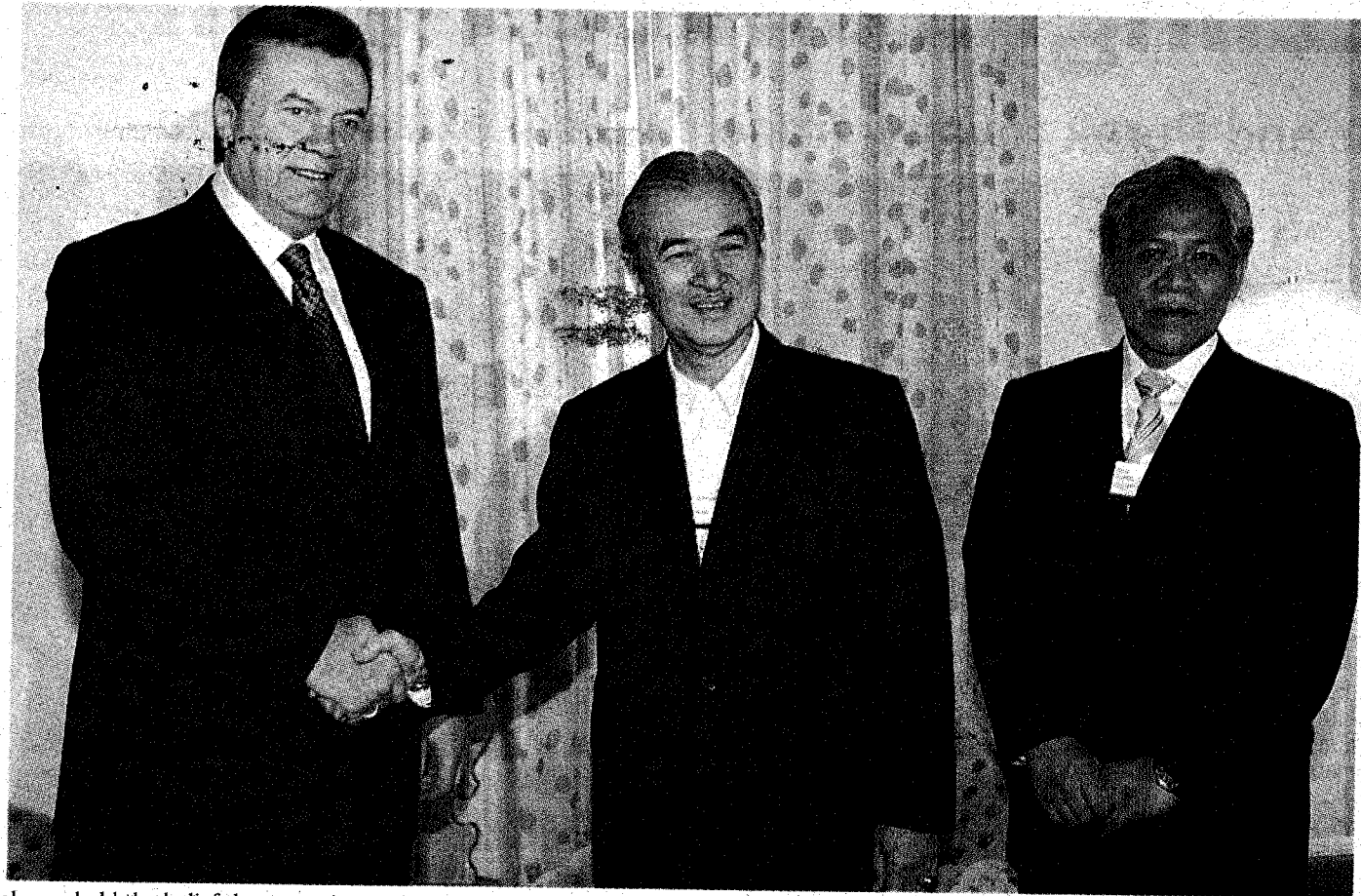
He added that Malaysia, being the chairman of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), was working towards getting the Muslim community to tackle such issues.

No group within the *ummah* should force its sectarian belief on another group, he told a press conference here moderated by World Economic Forums Head of Asia director Lee Howell yesterday.

For example, said Abdullah, the Shi'ites should keep their beliefs to themselves and, likewise, the Sunnis to theirs.

He said this in response to a question on the latest clashes in Lebanon, which put sectarian violence in the spotlight again.

The Prime Minister said he had



Welcome: Abdullah greeting Yanukovych before the start of their bilateral meeting yesterday as Terengganu Menteri Besar Idris Jusoh looks on. — Bernama

always held the belief that sectarian conflicts were linked to problems of unity within the *ummah*.

"For this reason, I have promoted Islam Hadhari to promote moderation and harmony, not only among Muslims but also with non-Muslims," he added.

Abdullah also said he believed in

the policy of engagement, not containment, because it was better to talk than to go to war.

He said Muslims were assuming certain things about non-Muslims without even talking to them.

"They may have certain things that might surprise us and they too would like to hear from us directly

on why we're so angry with them," he said.

The Prime Minister said all groups must talk to one another if they wanted to create better understanding and share a common platform.

During the day, the Prime Minister held bilateral talks with Iraqi vice-president Adil Abd Al-

Mahdi as well as his Pakistan and Ukraine counterparts Shaukat Aziz and Victor Yanukovych.

In the evening, he joined Philippines President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung at a plenary session on Asean 40 Years A New Future