

# Strength in diversity

PM: We have qualities that allow us to rise above any divide

The Star - 13/3/2007.

By V.P. SUJATA

vpsujata@thestar.com.my

**PUTRAJAYA:** Malaysians have the strength and spirit to change for the country's benefit, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister said the high level of tolerance had allowed them to rise above the racial and religious divide.

"For us Malaysians, this multi-ethnicity and diversity is our asset, and we cherish this asset," he said in his speech after being named the first Napoleon Hill Foundation's Global Leadership Award recipient in recognition of his outstanding global leadership at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre here yesterday.

Abdullah said Malaysians have been able to progress despite a challenging global environment where ethnic and religious identities and sensitivities were becoming stronger each day.

Malaysia, he added, was held as a model of successful nation-building by the international community and the envy of countries which had not been able to make their multi-cultural societies work quite as well.

"Even so, it is clear to me that the greatest challenge confronting Malaysians is the forging of a more resilient and united nation," he said.

Abdullah said he was convinced that the Malaysian model and the strategies employed now was the best.

"They (the strategies) will continue to be guided by the values and principles of moderation, consultation and justice for all," he said, adding that policies of integration and inclusion would remain fundamental to the country's political and social strategies.

As for economic policies, he said shared prosperity and equitable development would remain their foundation.



**Recognition:** Abdullah shaking hands with Napoleon Hill Associates (M) Sdn Bhd chairman Christina Chia after receiving the Napoleon Hill Foundation's Global Leadership Award during the official opening of the Napoleon Hill International Convention 2007 yesterday. With them are Napoleon Hill Foundation president James L. Oleson (right) and convention manager Tony Moses.

He, however, admitted that there was a lot of room for improvement and advised Malaysians to resist "the forces that seek to divide us."

"We must check the drift into our own narrow worlds in schools, campuses and workplaces and respect and celebrate our differences - also feel, think and live together as one," he said.

The US-based Napoleon Hill Foundation is a non-profit educational organisation dedicated to making the world a better place.

Earlier, the Prime Minister directed Universiti

Teknologi Mara (UiTM) to terminate the contracts of its associate colleges which fail to meet academic standards.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said UiTM must also ensure that the colleges provide conducive surroundings to educate young people.

Speaking at the launch of UiTM's 200,000 Enrolment Project, he said the colleges' failure to comply with UiTM's standards would only result in the university's reputation being marred and putting the students on the losing end.