

# Value-add programmes must be ongoing, says PM

**MELBOURNE:** Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said here yesterday that efforts to value-add national development programmes must be ongoing to ensure that the country remains competitive.

He said that in tandem there should also be efforts to develop human capital and bridge the economic gap among the communities in order to achieve the national objectives and provide for a better quality of life.

"In the development of a nation, there is no concluding chapter. Even after we achieve Vision 2020 to be a developed nation, the task of enhancing our position needs to be continued," he told 300 Malaysian student representatives at a meeting here.

Abdullah, who began a two-day visit to Australia on Thursday, earlier met with his Australian Prime Minister John Howard at the Treasury House here.

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Abdullah said that he and Howard had discussed issues that would be raised at the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) meeting in Sydney.

He said he also discussed bilateral issues with Howard, particularly on education whereby he suggested that more Australian students study in Malaysia since Malaysia had good educational facilities too.

He also said that he had invited Howard to attend Malaysia's 50th independence anniversary celebration in August.

On Bursa Malaysia's record-breaking streak - the benchmark Kuala Lumpur Composite Index (KLCI) surpassed the 1,360 level on Thursday - Abdullah, who is also Finance Minister, said the KLCI's record high signalled growing confidence in the Malaysian economy.

Abdullah returned to Kuala Lumpur last night. - Bernama