

KL-Canberra ties strong: Abdullah

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MELBOURNE: Relations between Malaysia and Australia have remained strong despite them having differing opinions on certain political issues, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said here yesterday.

These political issues, however, did not interfere with other aspects of the bilateral relations between Kuala Lumpur and Canberra, he said when replying to a question from an Australian reporter on relations between the two countries.

Abdullah spoke to reporters after jointly opening the "Nyonya Kebaya: Women's Costumes From Malaysia" exhibition with Janette Howard, wife

of Australian Prime Minister John Howard, at the immigration Museum.

Ties between Malaysia and Australia were strained under former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad who was said to have berated Australia as a racist lackey of a culturally-imperialistic United States.

The situation worsened when the then Australian premier Paul Keating called Mahathir a recalcitrant in 1993.

The relations improved after Abdullah took over as prime minister in 2003, and made the first official visit by a Malaysian premier to Australia after 21 years. The visit was reciprocated by Howard last year. — Bernama