

Abdullah seeks closer co-operation in agriculture

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia invites Australia to collaborate in new areas within a framework of co-operation that would be more binding, could withstand the test of time and based on mutual trust and confidence.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said there could be an increase in collaboration in the field of agriculture and agro-business, a priority for Malaysia.

The prime minister said there should be a more balanced import and export of agricultural prod-

ucts with Australia, adding that more Malaysian agricultural products would enter Down Under.

"Australia is now the second largest supplier of food to Malaysia," he said at the dinner hosted for Australian Prime Minister John Howard, who is in Malaysia for a three-day official visit.

Although both countries could be satisfied with the increasing volume of bilateral trade as a strong point in the present rela-

tions, Abdullah said they should continue to work for increased trade and investment.

"For instance, we can also foster more exchanges among parliamentarians. We can increase fellowship programmes involving think-tanks, universities, the media and civil society.

"I am certain that these can serve to build bridges and enhance dialogue and understanding between our peoples and cultures.

"We can also add value to the

collaboration that already exists between our two countries in the established areas such as trade and investment, education and human capital development, security and defence, science and technology as well as tourism," he said.

The prime minister said that while Australia continued to be a popular destination for young Malaysians seeking quality tertiary education, Malaysia had also poised itself as a hub for education and learning.

