

A welcome partner

The Star - 20/12/2006

Malaysia to help Venezuela fight poverty and create more jobs

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CARACAS: President Hugo Chavez has received a boost early into his third term with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi pledging to be a partner in his efforts to overcome poverty by creating more job opportunities.

Abdullah, who held talks with the newly re-elected president at Miraflores Palace here, said he was confident that Chavez would succeed in his mission to help his people and develop Venezuela.

He said Chavez's convincing re-election victory on Dec 3, in which he garnered 63% of the votes for a new six-year term, had made him more determined to raise the country's economic profile.

"He wants to ensure social justice and equal opportunities among his people and is interested in the Malaysian model of development," he told a news conference with Malaysian journalists covering his first official visit to Venezuela as Prime Minister.

Venezuela has some of the world's largest proven oil deposits and vast natural resources, yet most of its people live in poverty and in shanty towns. Unemployment is also high.

Chavez, who first swept to power in 1998, earned more than just praises and an "endorsement" of his policies from

Abdullah, who brought along "remedies" in the form of a business delegation.

Several MoUs and Letters of Intent are to be signed today to provide assistance to this South American nation of 26 million people.

Golden Hope Plantations Bhd, will undertake a feasibility study on large-scale oil palm cultivation here.

"As a tropical country, Venezuela is suitable for oil palm cultivation. There is a plan to station some of our experts

here," Abdullah said.

Petronas will be involved in oil and gas exploration, particularly in developing the heavy tar-like reserves of the Orinoco Belt in eastern Venezuela which require special technology to extract.

The Construction Industry Development Board will undertake a study, at no cost, to improve the road infrastructure here, while Iris Technology plans to offer its expertise on its latest e-passport and mobile incinerators.