

# PM: It's a win-win deal working with Singapore

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■ By Deborah Loh  
news@nst.com.my

**PUTRAJAYA:** There is no shame in co-operating with Singapore on the development of the Iskandar Development Region if it benefits both sides, the prime minister said.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said those who feared that the Iskandar would sell out Malay rights and economic autonomy were wrong.

"We cannot continue to doubt our capabilities to make our corridors a success."

He said last night: "We have the knowledge, skills and ability to ensure success. We need not feel unduly worried or ashamed about working with our neighbours for mutual benefit."

He was speaking on Malaysia's regional development corridors at the Cornell Club Dinner Talk Series, organised by the Oxford Cambridge Society of Malaysia.

Last week, Abdullah addressed fears concerning the Iskandar in his speech at the Umno general assembly. The topic was also raised by Umno delegates who had sought assurances that the Malays would not be left out of the project.

Abdullah said working with Singapore to develop Iskandar was advantageous because of the island republic's proximity to Johor.

"We plan to leverage on the proximity to Singapore to create a new global metropolis that Malaysians can truly be proud of. In this regard, some parties have expressed their concerns and reservations. In my mind, these concerns are unfounded."

Abdullah added, it was shameful "if we cannot overcome poverty and the backwardness of our own people".

Abdullah said the other development corridors — the Northern



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, flanked by Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Zulhasnan Rafique (left) and his wife Datin Seri Nooriah Ana Razak, presentingduit Raya to one of the 275 disabled children and orphans at the ministry's open house in Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, Kuala Lumpur yesterday. More than 10,000 people attended the event.

Corridor Economic Region (NCER) and the East Coast Economic Region (ECER) — were designed to leverage on existing potentials.

The NCER will emphasise

agribusiness, tourism, electrical and electronics manufacturing and design, and logistics, while the ECER would focus on petrochemicals, automotive and tourism industries.

The three corridors run through rural areas and are aimed at eradicating poverty, raising incomes and addressing the income disparity between rural and urban areas.