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Abdullah: Bridge digital gap to move forward

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KUALA LUMPUR: Research and development, coupled with sound innovation, are key factors which would enable developing economies to move up the value chain and spread development across society.

In emphasising this yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi also said the lack of local content in available technology for developing countries would lead to the widening of the global digital divide.

He believed the dominance of the English language in the Inter-

net continued to hinder many developing countries from participating in the knowledge economy.

"If this problem is not addressed immediately, developing countries may find themselves in a more critical situation, falling even more behind in the development curve.

"As an example, statistics indicate that the gap between average Internet penetration rate in developed countries and developing countries has not reduced over the course of a decade, but has instead continued to widen," he said in his keynote address read by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at the launch of the 3rd

Global Knowledge conference.

Organised by Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP), the three-day conference aims to connect grassroots knowledge with that of major institutions, corporations and multinationals by building partnerships that harness the power of knowledge and information communication technology to eradicate poverty and improve lives.

Also present were Energy, Water and Communications Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation director-general and GKP chairman of the executive committee Walter Fust and GKP executive director Rinalia

Abdul Rahim.

Speaking at the Siemens Malaysia 35th anniversary dinner later, Abdullah said Malaysia, under the BN government, would continue to be a business-friendly destination for foreign investors.

"We assure you, in Malaysia, you'll find stability as our policies are practical. As long as Barisan Nasional is in power, we will always be a business-friendly government."

He said the very presence of many multinational companies in the country was testament to a strong vote of confidence in the strengths of the country's political and economic system.