

DATE: 03/10/2007

# PM: OK to have register of sex offenders but...

NST-3/10/2007

■ From Zaharah Othman in London

DRAWING up a register of known sex offenders would have its benefits but it had to be properly carried out and implemented, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The prime minister was responding to a question on the possibility of drawing up a register of sex offenders such as paedophiles, in the wake of the tragic and brutal death of sexually-assaulted 8-year-old Nurin Jazlin Jazimin two weeks ago.

"If these people are known, it would be easier to avoid them. But there might be people who would not like the idea as their names would be made public.

"But those people who had committed the crime and had gone to court, would have had their names publicised anyway. We are not publicising something that was supposed to have been kept secret," added Abdullah, who spoke after the official launch of LimKokWing University London on Monday.

Asked whether a register of child sex offenders would be drawn up and made public especially for parents to be vigilant for the safety of their children, he said this would be up to the agencies that would do the planning for this purpose.

"They have to do this properly. This is important."

In the United Kingdom, after the death of Sarah Payne, 8, who was sexually abused six years ago, a Sunday newspaper campaigned to name and shame sex offenders.

Sarah's parents called for the adoption of Sarah's Law, under which parents would have access to lists of paedophiles living in their neighbourhood. However, there was criticism as such lists would drive offenders underground and there was also the



Tan Sri Lim Kok Wing (left) receiving the good wishes of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the launch of LimKokWing University London on Monday. — NST picture by Zaharah Othman

risk vigilantes would take the law into their own hands.

Abdullah was on a brief stopover here with his wife, Datin Sri Jeane Abdullah, after addressing the United Nations General Assembly last week.

His entourage included Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and his wife, Datin Seri Sharifah Aziah Syed Zainal Abidin, and the Malaysian High Commissioner to the UK, Datuk Abd Aziz Mohamed, and his wife, Datin Munah Abdul Razak.

Earlier, at the launch of LimKokWing University London, Abdullah said he would like to see other Malaysian universities opening campuses in other countries.

"We must make the effort to expand our universities to open up opportunities to students not only in Malaysian campuses but also at universities being set up in other countries.

Malaysian education. The university's international presence plays a major role in securing recognition abroad for the high quality of Malaysian education."

Speaking to a packed audience of students and academicians from local universities, Abdullah said that while it was important that Malaysians learnt about other cultures and business practices, they must also take steps to educate others about Malaysia's unique culture and practices.

He said this in reference to the university's plan to establish a centre for Malay studies, with the aim to promote the study and research of Malay culture, arts, customs, heritage and language.

University founder president Tan Sri Lim Kok Wing, in his opening address, said the establishment of LimKokWing University in London was important to the university's philosophy of merging the best of East and West.

"If you know only one side of the world but not the other, then you will spend your lives knowing only half the story, seeing only half the picture and missing out on half the opportunities," said Lim.

By reaching out to the world from London, "we will help develop human capital crucial to the transformation of communities and industries in developing countries", he added.

At the function, a LimKokWing scholarship fund worth RM10 million was announced as part of its effort to reduce the disparity between rural and urban sectors.

Nineteen students from Felda schemes, the first recipients of this scholarship fund, arrived last week.

Noor Azleen Ambia, 25, a final year fashion student, said she was very proud to benefit from this scholarship, and be given the opportunity to study in a foreign environment and experience the culture of the host country.