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Workers must offer value, says Abdullah

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KUALA LUMPUR: No nation wishes to suppress wages or keep pay levels artificially low in order to attract investment, the prime minister said.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it was only fair and appropriate for workers to be paid according to their productivity and value.

"What is fair and appropriate to employers and employees must be dictated by prevailing market conditions and commercial considerations as companies and nations

must be bound by the rules of the market economy," he said yesterday.

Nations must understand the laws of supply and demand, Abdullah said. "Ultimately, nations and their workers must ensure that they can offer value to the world's markets," he said.

Speaking at the Union Network International (UNI) Conference for the Asia-Pacific region, Abdullah said along with ensuring decent work conditions and fair labour laws, nations and workers shared

a responsibility to offer greater added value to the world.

"Upgrading skills and improving incentives for performance must be pursued, not only by governments but also by business owners and their workers.

"We have a shared responsibility to improve ourselves, and in so doing, lift our incomes, living standards, businesses and economic growth.

"Nations must establish sufficient protection against unfettered markets, such as adequate

safety laws and fair workplace conditions," he said before declaring the conference open.

Abdullah also presented UNI Outstanding Employer-Partner Awards for industrial relations practices to Telekom Malaysia, Star Publications, Banco de Oro Universal Bank of the Philippines and the Overseas Chinese Banking Corp and MediaCorp from Singapore.

The three-day event was attended by 560 trade unionists from 23 Asia-Pacific countries.