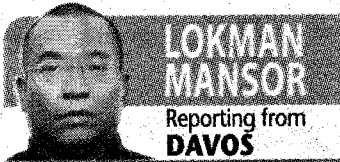


PM: Malaysia a model of interfaith co-operation

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the power-sharing concept of Malaysia's government had brought progress to the nation because its leadership of various races and faiths believed in working together for the good of all Malaysians.

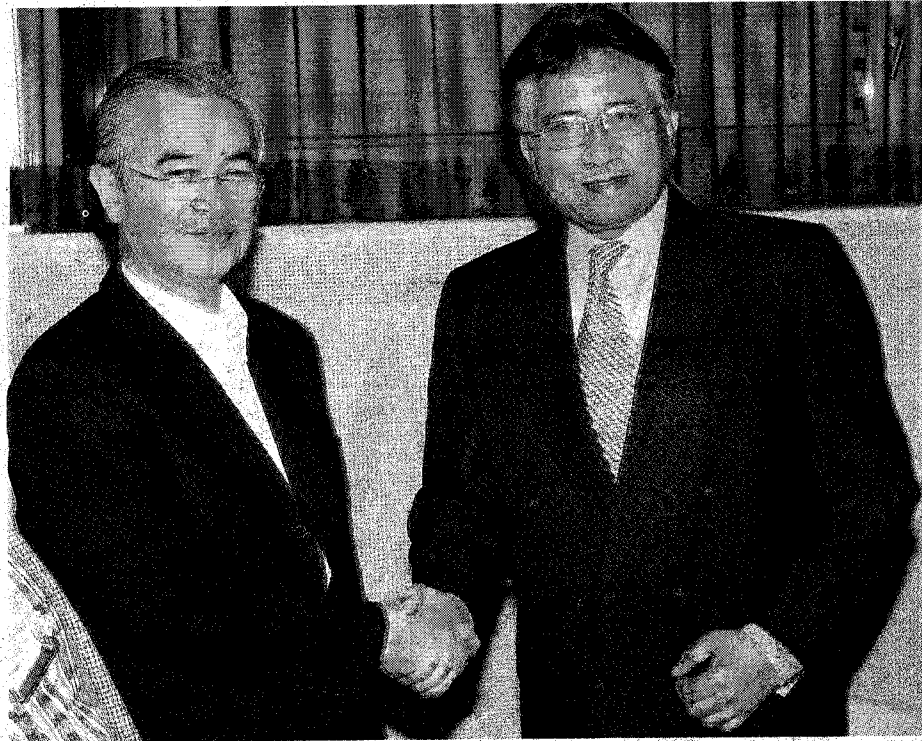
"Because politics is the major factor that determines the pattern of development and future of the country, our consensus is wide-ranging. All aspects of the country's development receive the attention of the cabinet that represents different races and faiths," Abdullah said at a press conference on Thursday.

He said he made this point as an example of interfaith co-operation during the question-and-answer session on "Faith and Modernisation" at the annual World Economic Forum (WEF) here, where he was one of the speakers.

The session was chaired by former British prime minister Tony Blair and attracted an audience of more than 200 delegates that included non-governmental organisations, religious leaders, academics and government leaders.

"We have succeeded because of our concept of sharing power and making decisions through consensus. We can proudly say that we have succeeded for 50 years. But, this does not mean that there are no problems to be addressed.

"What is the common thread we all have that binds us together? It is the belief and self-confidence in our capacity to co-operate for the



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf (right) meeting up at the World Economic Forum's Congress Centre in Davos on Wednesday. — Bernama picture

well-being of the rakyat and development of the country, to work together to ensure that the country and its people continue to prosper and grow.

"This is our shared commitment and belief — that with the partnership that exists in the government, we can achieve what is best for Malaysians of various races and faiths."

On his proposal for a strategic collaboration between the West and the Muslim world to advance the economic agenda of the Makkah Declaration, Abdullah said the focus was still on interfaith dialogues.

"The important thing is that there must be an effort to get it started. In my view, interest and

discussion on this subject is growing. There is greater realisation now that this issue is important and needs to be addressed together, regardless of faith."

On his meeting with Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, the prime minister said both leaders agreed to speed up the formation of a joint commission to enhance trade and investment ties.

He said they had discussed sending Malaysian students to universities in the Ukraine and the potential for Petronas to participate in the country's oil and gas development.

Abdullah also met with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, who briefed him on the situation in Pakistan and its return to

normalcy, and affirmed that parliamentary elections would be held on Feb 18 as scheduled.

On the sidelines of the forum on Thursday, Abdullah also met with WEF executive chairman Prof Klaus Schwab, Standard Chartered group chairman Mervyn Dervies and Bombardier Inc chairman and chief executive officer Laurent Beaudoin.

Abdullah said both corporate figures had congratulated Malaysia on its growing economy.

Dervies had also commended Malaysia for its leadership role in the development of Islamic banking globally and said Standard Chartered was working to expand its Islamic banking services in the country.