

THE STAR

DATE: 23/4/2008

## PM: Find ways to reach out to other religions

The Star - 23/4/2008

**KUALA LUMPUR:** One of the most difficult "bridges" to build is to have people appreciate the value system of others, be it in terms of religion or forms of worship, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister said that "bridge" should be cautiously built and strengthened.

"It has been proven that the more societies learn about other cultures, they too become more tolerant and accepting of others," he said yesterday in his speech at the Asem (Asia-Europe Meeting) Culture Ministers meeting.

Abdullah said dialogues and cooperation between cultures and civilisations should aim to tackle simultaneously the two inter-related problems.

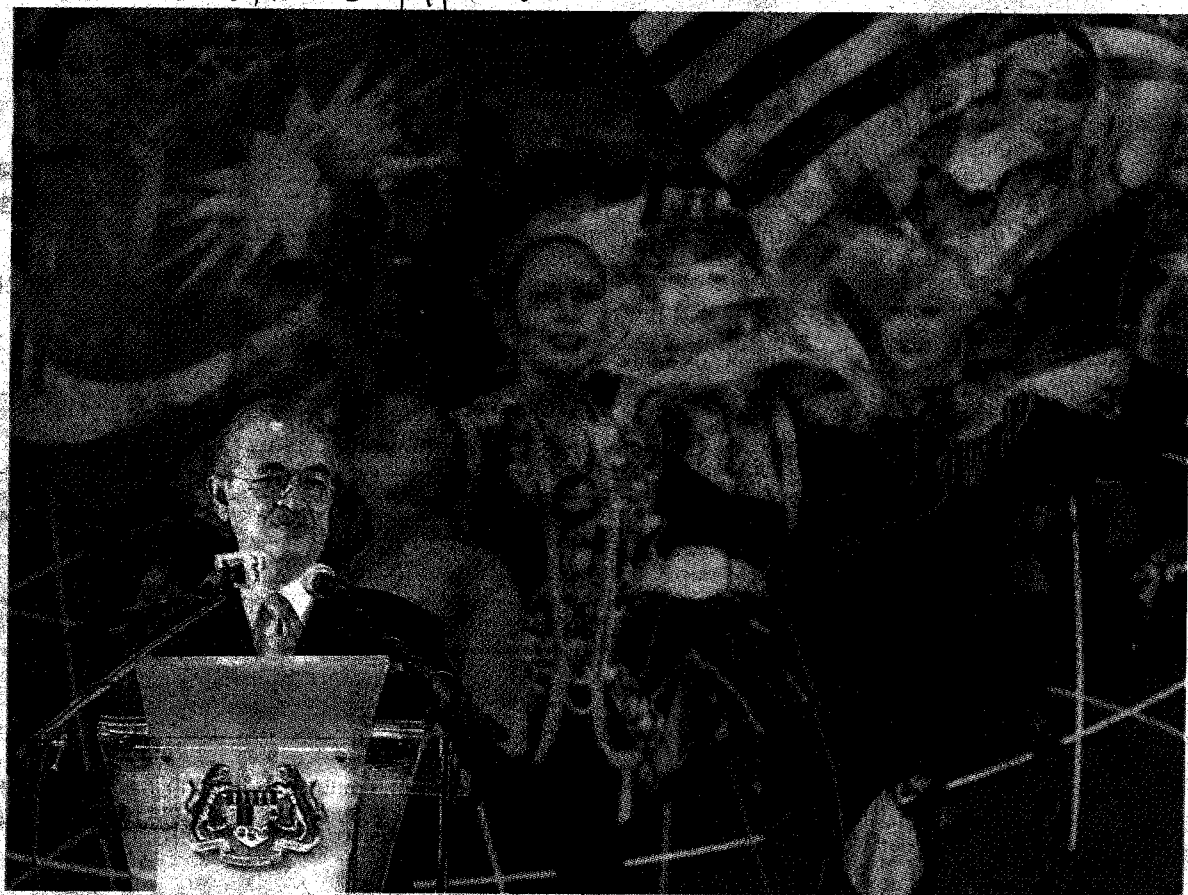
He said while identifying the best approaches for promoting mutual understanding and tolerance, it should at the same time achieve success in removing ignorance and prejudices.

"While taking pride in protecting our own heritage and cultures, we can and should be willing to respect the heritage and cultures of others," he added.

He said it was necessary to have more dialogue and co-operation between the people of Asia and Europe at many levels and in various fields particularly in social development, labour, employment, education and training, public health and the environment.

Cultural exchanges, he added, should include all layers of society especially the youth.

"Young people possess idealism and enthusiasm. Most often, they are very creative as well. But more importantly, they are the leaders of



**Clear message:** Abdullah delivering his address during the opening session of the Asian and European Culture Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

tomorrow in our respective societies. We must engage them now, not later," he added.

He also said there was a need to promote industries that cater for and allow creative arts and skills to blossom. He believed such industries would facilitate the protection of intellectual property and traditions.

"Cultural creativity will create

new jobs. They will help to develop and sustain a mature society," he said.

Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister Datuk Shafie Apdal said that during a meeting member countries hoped to draw up an action plan to establish stronger cultural and heritage exchanges between both continents.

"We have discussed the need to

have cultural, handicraft, arts and heritage exchanges," he told reporters.

Shafie said countries like France had displays on Asian culture and arts in their museums, which was a good start.

He said that at the same time, Europe was also told of the sensitivities of certain Asian countries including their customs and traditions.