

■ **Centres of tolerance, excellence:** Renewal vital for unity, says PM

# School system overhaul

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**PETALING JAYA, Tues.** — Overhaul national schools to make them the first choice for education, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi urged today.

Emphasising the need for an early-education system which cultivated inter-racial understanding while providing quality education, Abdullah said his proposed revamp of national schools was intended to promote unity and excellence among Malaysians.

“We need to effect changes and improvements to make national schools the ‘Schools of Choice’ while safeguarding the position of national-type schools today,” he said.

Abdullah also called for the recruitment of more non-Malay teachers and headmasters.

“We must address the concerns of parents about their quality and rectify them so that parents will gladly send their children to a high-quality, multi-racial school.”

The Prime Minister said this in his keynote address on “Revitalising Education: Equipping Malaysia for the Realities of the 21st Century” at the Malaysian Education Summit 2004 here.

The summit is jointly organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI), the Education Ministry and Ministry of Higher Learning.

In his address to hundreds of academicians, education industry entrepreneurs and senior government officials, Abdullah proposed, among others, the introduction of language lessons in Mandarin, Tamil and Arabic, giving students the option to choose regardless of their racial or religious background.

The Prime Minister also said that it was necessary to enhance teachers’ training and to educate teachers to be aware and responsive to multi-racial sensitivities.

Strengthening Islamic and Ethics education, reviving co-curricular activities and introducing twinning programmes were also among his recommendations for national schools.

Abdullah said the Government was serious about enhancing the role of national schools and would do all it