

African nations keen to learn from us

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"LET us learn from you." That was the message several African leaders delivered to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on the first day of the Southern Africa International Dialogue here yesterday. Mozambique is keen on using Malaysia's smart card technology while Lesotho and Swaziland are interested in learning about small and medium industries.

"They are impressed by our smart card technology and e-government and they want to introduce smart identity cards and driving licences to their people," said Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Jamaludin Jarjis, who took part in the dialogue.

Many questions were directed at Abdullah during the morning session. Participants wanted to know how Malaysia had succeeded in developing the country and transforming its agrarian-based economy to a diversified one. The setting up of the SME Bank by the Government was also a talking point among the delegates.

"The Prime Minister spoke on the importance of helping small entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises to help generate the economy.

"The leaders and delegates are convinced that Malaysia's formula in getting the SMEs to generate the economy is also applicable to their countries," said Jamaludin.

Yesterday, at the opening of the dialogue, Abdullah called for a more meaningful partnership between member countries.

He urged them to pursue tangible co-operation and said that their agenda at the dialogue should encompass poverty eradication, capacity building and human capital development.

Among the leaders attending the dialogue are Lesotho Prime Minister Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, President of Mozambique Armando Emilio Guebuza, Prime Minister of Swaziland Absalom Themba Dlamini and former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

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