

PM: Form 'truly Malaysian' trade groups

# The multi-racial advantage

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Sun.** — Businessmen of different races should form consortiums and seek out trade and investment opportunities in China, India and other emerging markets.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that these multi-racial and "truly Malaysian" groups would have an advantage operating in an environment where Mandarin, Tamil, Arabic and other languages were spoken.

"We can go to China as a big company, with big capital and big capabilities. Let us go there to bring back investments or to develop trade and business relationship," he said.

After having conversations with leaders and businessmen there during a recent visit to China, it was clear that they wanted to forge stronger relationships with Malaysians.

"They wanted to see Malaysians who are from the Chinese, Malay and Indian races. That is what they said. If that is so, I believe we can take certain steps. Why can't we attempt this? It is not impossible," he said in an off-the-cuff address during the opening of MCA's 51st General Assembly.

Describing it as a "very practical suggestion", Abdullah also said these consortiums could also do business with Middle Eastern countries which were developing fast as well as Japan and African nations.

"Why not use each other's strength and combine efforts into one truly Malaysian company that can be successful anywhere, and not just China and India?" Abdullah asked, to hearty applause from the audience.

But there was one caveat: the consortium's service had to be really competitive and of high quality.

Speaking later, the Prime Minister

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said that government-linked companies, some of which are already doing business in China and India, could also get involved in a multi-racial consortium.

However, the companies wishing to join the consortium must be strong in their business and have the necessary

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# Chambers of commerce to discuss idea

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ry expertise, he said.

MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said he wanted to have discussions with the Malay, Chinese and Indian chambers of commerce to see if this idea could be implemented.

Meanwhile, Malay Chamber of Commerce secretary-general Datuk Ramli Mohamad supported the PM's proposal and said he would get in touch with other chambers of commerce.

"We will discuss with them and try to develop concepts for consortiums," he said.