Abdullah: Adapt to change to be successful

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians have been reminded that the nation's success will hinge largely on its ability to adapt to change, especially in the face of competitive and innovative global challenges.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said challenges in a country like Malaysia were undeniable, and required changes that were both necessary and difficult.

"In many cases, a change made today will not be apparent until a later date. At times, a decision for change will appear to fly in the face of accepted truths," he said.

"In all cases, there will be groups that agree with you and groups that don't No matter how well considered, there will never be universal concurrence, for change exacts costs," he added in his speech for the opening of the Global Leadership Forum 2006 here yesterday.

His speech was read out by Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop.

Abdullah said a leader must decide how change was to be managed, negotiated and implemented.

"It comes down to judgment and what I call *hikmah* (wisdom)," he said.

"True leaders are those who bring together their knowledge of their domain, be it a conglomerate or a country, who weigh the implications of each of their options, and who then employ their judgment to effect the best possible outcome."

The Prime Minister added that true leaders also based their judgment on a strong moral compass.

"A clear conscience is absolutely needed in order to have the courage to make sacrifices, for in these heady times, there are no easy choices to be made," he said.

Abdullah noted that the Government had formulated a set of policy guidelines with five thrusts called the "National Mission," which would focus on the country's nation-building efforts.

"The National Mission aims to balance the pressing demands of external forces with the more long-term nature of internal change," he said.