

NEW STRAITS TIMES

DATE: 3/8/2008

> MALAYSIAN STUDENT LEADERS' SUMMIT 2008

# PM: Diversity is nation's strength

NST- 3/8/2008

■ By Azura Abas  
news@nst.com.my

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia has flourished under the formula of unity, which is to love, respect and accept the differences of its people.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the people should not hate those of a different race or religion.

Abdullah said this yesterday when he fielded questions from participants at the Malaysian Student Leaders' Summit 2008.

Also present was Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

Abdullah said student leaders who would one day take over the country's leadership must consider multiracial factors when making decisions.

"The country is rich in diversity and we must celebrate it as our strength. Malaysia's main objective is the development of unity.

"So, young leaders must incorporate the country's multicultural elements in their aspirations to build the nation."

On the civil service being seen dominated by a single race, Abdullah said it was a colour-blind institution as various measures had been taken to employ more non-Malays.

"We are doing everything we can to reflect the true racial composition of Malaysia in the civil service.

"True, we don't have enough non-Malays in some areas. Still, we have other mechanisms to include the views of non-Malays in our policy-making process."

On realising Vision 2020, he said Malaysia experienced hiccups, especially with the current high prices of fuel and global food shortage, which had a major impact on the nation's economy.

"When Vision 2020 was formulated, it was based on an annual GDP (gross domestic product) growth of six per cent per annum.

"Due to the two major global issues, we are having some difficulties achieving this growth. The country has to deal with inflation."

Abdullah promised that all measures were being imple-

mented to keep the country's economy healthy.

He said the Barisan Nasional had been working to keep its promises in the general election.

This could be seen in the reforms planned for the judiciary as well as the Anti-Corruption Agency.

"I have made several statements on these matters and changes are underway.

"We have also started reforms for the police force and we will continue with our efforts to keep up with the ever-changing times.

"We have also instituted reforms in the financial and educational sectors."

Abdullah also stressed the need to eradicate poverty, irrespective of race and religion.

"We do not want to be like some states in Africa. The nation must be developed for every Malaysian.

"There must also be equitable distribution of wealth and education.

"It is inhumane to deprive the children from poor families of education."