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Form joint ventures, entrepreneurs urged

MALAYSIAN and Croatian entrepreneurs are urged to develop joint ventures, particularly in power generation, shipbuilding and construction.

Their joint-venture companies can also invest in third countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told a news conference after attending a delegation meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Croatian Prime Minister Zlatko Matesa in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Abdullah said both leaders agreed there is need to intensify cooperation in the three areas because of the edge both have.

"Both leaders have agreed there has been some progress since Dr Mahathir last visited Croatia in terms of bilateral cooperation but more needs to be done.

"They also emphasised the importance for close cooperation in the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina," he added.

Citing the tripartite agreement involving Malaysia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to reconstruct war-torn Bosnia, Abdullah said there has not been much progress on the matter although the cooperation was mooted about two years ago.

"So, both leaders have placed the importance of this tripartite joint venture to move ahead. They will encourage companies concerned to immediately develop some projects that they will work together," he added.

In addition to the tripartite cooperation, Abdullah said the Croatian Government has suggested that Malaysia assist Bosnia-Herzegovina to develop their small business or industries.

"They have identified the need to assist Bosnia-Herzegovina in providing business and jobs for the many disarmed soldiers of that war-torn country.

"The Croatian Prime Minister suggested that perhaps Malaysia would have some experience in this area of development for small business to help Bosnia-Herzegovina," he added.

Abdullah said Malaysia will send officials from the Economic Planning Unit to study the situation and identify the possible types of small businesses that can be introduced to enable disarmed soldiers to participate.

"It is important for these disarmed soldiers to have some economic activities. Without economic activities, they would become unemployed and this might result in social problems in Bosnia-Herzegovina in future," he said.

On the political front in Bosnia Herzegovina, Abdullah said the Croatian Prime Minister has given the assurance that Zagreb will stand firm in its policy to see that the Bosnia federation succeeds.

He said Matesa had said that those who opposed the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord will be dealt with.

"They (Croatian Government) will not tolerate those who will create disturbance ... if they have some reasons to cause disturbance of the peace accord, they (Croatian Government) would be very tough on this matter.

"It is the policy of Croatia to see that the Bosnia federation succeeds. Those who are responsible for the trouble even in Croatia will be severely dealt with," he added.

Abdullah said both prime ministers agreed it is important that the war-indicted criminals in Bosnia-Herzegovina be brought to trial at the Hague.

"As long as these war-indicted criminals are at large, they will affect peace," he added.

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