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Proposal for sister-school programme with Bosnia

Zainul Ariffin in Sarajevo

A SISTER-SCHOOL programme has been proposed between Malaysia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to promote exchange programmes and interaction between pupils and teachers of both countries.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said this programme would underscore Malaysia's commitment to the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina's economic, political and social needs.

He said this during his meeting on Tuesday with Dr Fahrudin Rizvanbegovic, the country's Education, Science, Culture and Sports Minister. Najib was on a two-day visit, and among the highlights of his programme was the official opening of the Camil Sijanac Primary School yesterday. The school, ravaged by the war between the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs which ended two years ago, was rebuilt with funds collected from Malaysian pupils and teachers.

Najib said Malaysia would like to help the country rebuild its educational system.

The sister-school programme, similar to the twinning of cities in different nations, would allow pupils and teachers to interact, he said.

Rizvanbegovic, in acknowledging Malaysia's assistance, recalled how touched he was when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad shed tears at the launching of the Education Ministry's Bosnian Education Fund in September last year.

It was significant, he said, that the money was collected from pupils and teachers of all races and religions, a lesson to his people that people of different ethnicity could live together peacefully.

As of May, the fund stood at RM3.06 million.

The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, established following the Dayton Peace Accord two years ago, is made up of Bosnians, Serbs and Croats.

The war in the former Yugoslavia had destroyed most of the schools in the country, among which was the school in the Dobrinja district.

It was located at the frontline and had been used by the Bosnian Muslims as a fort to defend Sarajevo against the Serbs.

The renovated school, once called Nicole Tesla, is now known as the Camil Sijanac Primary School in honour of a famous Bosnia-Herzegovina literary figure.

Najib said the school would be a living symbol of Malaysian kinship and solidarity with the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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