

**Arms the priority as Putin meets Abdullah
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President Vladimir Putin will be keen to promote Russia's growing arms trade with Malaysia when he meets its prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Tuesday, the Kommersant newspaper said.

The Malaysian leader arrived in Moscow on Monday on a four-day visit, just as Russia is in the process of delivering 18 Sukhoi 30-MKM fighter jets to Malaysia under a deal signed in 2003.

"Malaysia is already a serious buyer of Russian weapons and in future could turn into one of the biggest markets" for Russian arms in southeast Asia, Kommersant said.

Russia is also participating in tenders to sell Malaysia a range of armoured vehicles and anti-tank rocket systems, the newspaper said.

Russian officials are hopeful they can sell Malaysia helicopters and a variety of air defence systems, it added.

"It can't be ruled out that Vladimir Putin will personally ask Ahmad Badawi to take a closer look at the Russian products," Kommersant said.

The two leaders are also likely to discuss cooperation in the oil and gas sphere. Last year, Malaysia's Petronas acquired a one-percent stake in Russian oil giant Rosneft for US\$1.1 billion.

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