

Putin: Meeting is to reaffirm, expand ties

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MALAYSIA and Russia will co-operate to foster peace and security at global and regional levels.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the two countries have excellent co-operation at the level of regional relations in the context of Russia's engagement with Malaysia through the Asean dialogue process and the Asean Regional Forum.

"We value Russia's contributions to peace and stability in Southeast Asia. Malaysia looks forward to bringing our bilateral relations to new higher levels as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Russia."

He said a joint commission will also be established to quickly implement programmes agreed upon at the leaders meeting.

The commission would meet once a year, alternately in Russia and Malaysia.

Abdullah made the proposal when he met Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin yesterday during his three-day visit to Moscow.

Putin said Russia was keen on such a commission, saying that his meeting with Abdullah was to reaffirm and expand the four decade-old relations between Kuala Lumpur and the Kremlin.

"We have been able to build a strong friendship based on mutual respect. We are confident that we are in a position to advance the relationship," Putin said.

Putin also expressed his confidence that trade between Malaysia and Russia will expand.

Malaysia is Russia's largest trading partner in Asean with bilateral trade between the two countries amounting to US\$1.1 billion (RM3.8 billion) last year and the first quarter of this year has chalked up a 2.6 per cent expansion.

Malaysian national oil corporation, Petronas, is currently working jointly with Russia's Gazprom in developing several gas fields in Asia. Petronas is a shareholder in Russia's oil company, Rosneft, holding a stake of just above one per cent, valued at slightly more than US\$1 billion.

Abdullah said the meeting with Putin has opened up new areas of possible co-operation including the energy sector.

He said both countries also



Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) welcoming Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the Kremlin yesterday. — Bernama picture

We have been able to build a strong friendship based on mutual respect.

*Vladimir Putin
Russian President*

agreed to sign a number of agreements including those on investment, avoidance of double taxation and protection of intellectual property rights.

Abdullah said he also proposed for Russia to train Malaysian sportsmen and sportswomen and help in the development of sports medicine in the country.

In his speech during a state banquet hosted by Putin, Abdullah said Malaysia wanted to expand economic relations with Russia into areas beyond trading of traditional products, especially towards the services sector.

He highlighted Malaysia's expertise in providing Islamic banking and finance services, airport and seaport management, hospitality and events and conference management.

The two nations also have a working co-operation in high technology areas, including space exploration where the first Malaysian cosmonaut will travel in a Russian spacecraft to the International Space Station in October.

Abdullah also mentioned the increasingly wider contacts between the people of both nations, saying while more Russian tourists are visiting Malaysia, more Malaysians have chosen Russian universities to further their education, especially in the field of medicine. There are now about 2,000 Malaysian students studying in Russia.

Speaking to Malaysian newsmen later, Abdullah said Malaysia and Russia would work towards signing an agreement on partial abolishment of visa in the near future.

He also said that both leaders agreed on the need for dialogues to correct the misconception towards Islam.