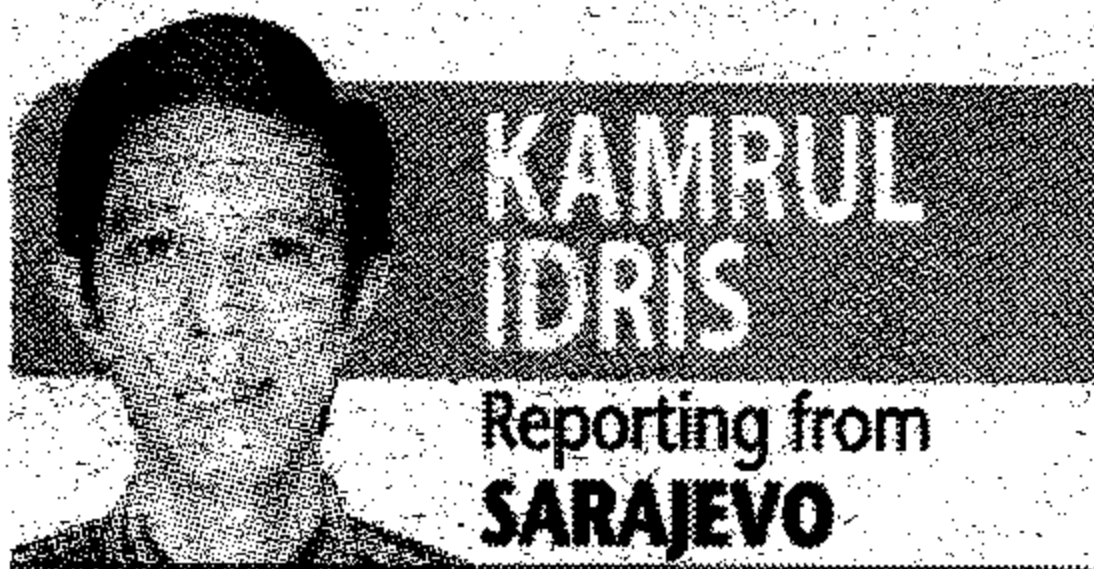


# Get to know each other, PM tells businessmen

NST : Friday 22/6/2007



DATUK Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said economic relations between Malaysia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were lagging and wanted businessmen from both countries to get to know each other better.

The prime minister said the governments of both countries had been pushing for better economic ties.

"I see the major reason for the paucity of engagement on both sides is the limited knowledge and experience about what each of us has to offer the other.

"I wish to see a stronger Malaysian economic presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina," he told more than 300 members of the two countries' private sectors at a business forum here.

Malaysia and Bosnia and Herzegovina signed a tax avoidance agreement to add to the economic framework established between the two governments.

Trade and investment guarantee agreements were concluded in 1994 followed by a bilateral payments pact two years later.

At the news conference after the signing ceremony, Abdullah said "economic co-operation does not commensurate with the friendly relations".

This sentiment was echoed by the Bosnian chairman of the Council of Ministers Nikola Spiric, who expressed his government's readiness to improve the institu-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi inspecting a guard-of-honour in Sarajevo yesterday. He is accompanied by Bosnian chairman of the Council of Ministers Nikola Spiric. — Bernama picture

tional support for business and investment.

"We must expand our trade by focusing not on our individual markets but on the larger regional markets that we have access to," he said, citing the Malaysian example of export-led growth as a way of overcoming the limitations of the two countries' small size.

With the launching pad Malaysia provides into the Asean region and Bosnia and Herzegov-

ina into southern Europe, trade between the two countries could grow faster.

Last year, total trade amounted to US\$2 million (RM6.9 million), with Malaysia exporting electronics and electrical products almost exclusively and importing mainly furniture and aluminium.

Abdullah listed highway construction, telecommunications, education and tourism as the areas with the most potential.

Malaysian road builders have a foothold here and are eyeing the 532km Pan European Corridor linking Budapest to Place in Croatia which passes through Sarajevo.

Malaysian companies could also take part in the building of energy plants, Abdullah said.

Bosnia has plans to become an energy exporter with the harnessing of hydroelectric power at its river basins.