»My visit is a reflection of the importance that Malaysia attaches to its relations with Italy«

DATUK SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI

Malaysia's ties with Italy set to expand

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ROME: Ties between Malaysia and Italy are set to expand following the signing of a joint declaration on economic cooperation yesterday and another one on agriculture today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he and his Italian counterpart Romano Prodi had discussed at length the declarations and bilateral ties.

The economic declaration was signed by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar while Italian International Trade Minister Emma Bonino signed for the host country.

"I expect our relations, which are already mature and strong, to expand further," Abdullah said at a joint press conference at Prodi's official guesthouse Villa Mardama here.

Abdullah is on the last leg of his visit to three European countries. He was in Russia and Bosnia Herzegovina earlier.

"My visit to Italy is a reflection of the importance that Malaysia attaches to its relations with Italy." Prodi in his remarks said the two leaders also discussed Middle East issues as well as world peace in general.

"The two countries share the same views on these matters ranging from Darfur to Gaza, Afghanistan and Iraq.

"I also expressed our gratitude to the Malaysian Prime Minister on Malaysia's willingness to contribute 350 troops for the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Lebanon," he added.