



Strengthening ties: Abdullah having a chat with Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh at the Presidential Palace in Sana'a yesterday. — Bernama

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Emulate Asean's success, OIC urged

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SANA'A (Yemen): Malaysia wants the Organisation of Islamic Conference to emulate the success of Asean in trade between member countries.

"In our region (South-East Asia), we are committed towards bringing into being the Asean Economic Community by 2015.

"We are convinced that trade and investment liberalisation among member countries will make the region a more attractive investment base.

"In fact, since the coming into force of the Asean Free Trade Area in 1993, intra-Asean trade has increased almost four-fold from US\$82.3bil (RM296.28bil) in 1993 to US\$306.4bil (RM1.1tril) in 2005," Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told the Malaysia Yemen Business Forum here yesterday.

The Prime Minister, who is on a three-day

visit to Yemen, said the Framework Agreement of the Trade Preferential System among OIC member countries (TPS-OIC) and the Protocol on the Preferential Tariff Scheme (Pretas) were initiatives that could boost intra-OIC trade.

"I would therefore encourage Yemen to sign on to the TPS-OIC and Pretas," he said adding that Malaysia's exports to OIC countries grew by 17% in 2006 - to US\$11.8bil (RM42.5bil) from US\$10.1bil (RM36.7bil) in 2005.

Abdullah told the forum that Malaysia and Yemen shared a similar history in international trade.

"Both are situated on trade routes used by early Muslim traders. Over the years, our search for growth and development has taken us along differing paths.

"It is my hope that today's occasion will serve as an opportunity for our business communities to reacquaint themselves so that we can contribute to each others' economic growth and well-being," he added.