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# OIC-West partnership

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## Abdullah proposes strategic enterprise to bridge divide

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**DAVOS:** Malaysia has proposed a strategic partnership between Muslims and the West to advance the economic agenda of the Makkah Declaration.

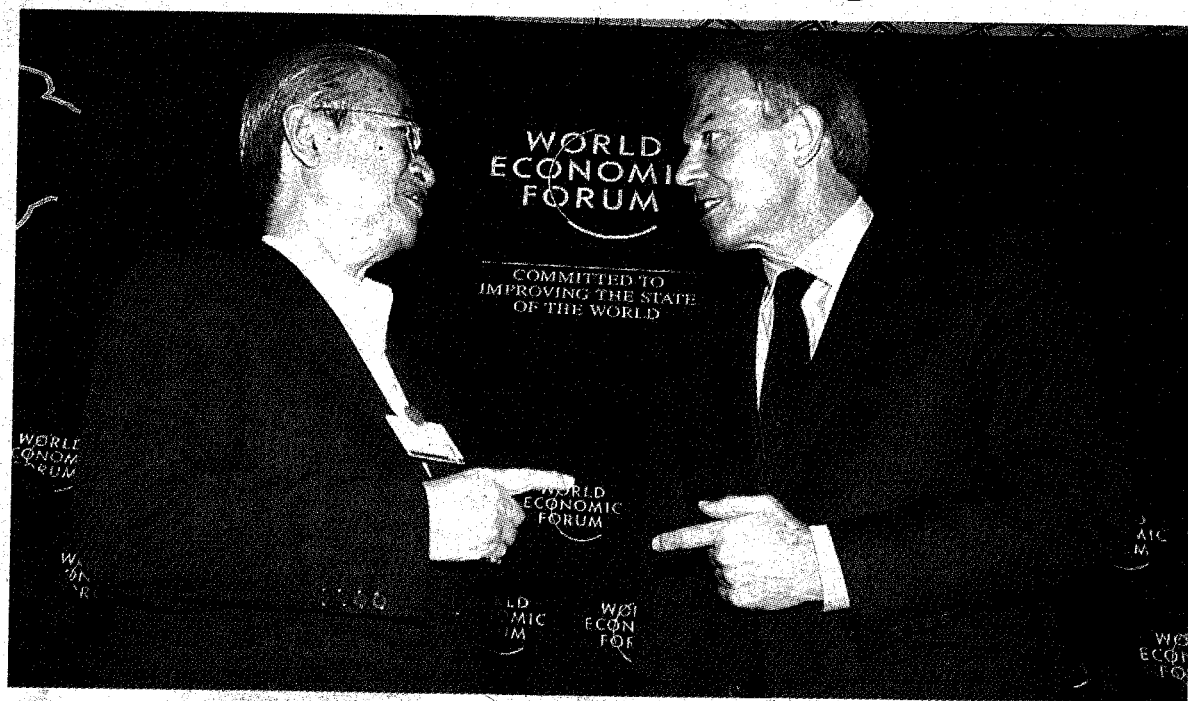
Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said this would be a historic opportunity to help bridge the deep and unhealthy divide and reconcile the two great civilisations.

The partnership could take shape through an institutional platform that would bring together the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the West, he said.

"The root causes (of the divide) are political but they should not become an obstacle to productive collaboration in other fields," Abdullah said during the plenary session on Faith and Modernisation at the World Economic Forum annual meeting here yesterday.

Former British premier Tony Blair chaired the session. The speakers were Iran's Porch of Wisdom Cultural Institution president Mahdi Hadavi, American Jewish Committee executive director David A. Harris, former Archbishop of Washington Theodore Cardinal McCarrick and Saddleback Church founder Rick Warren.

Abdullah said the tasks could include the mapping of international and Western support and collaboration, and the identification of further



**Premier chat:** Abdullah speaking to Blair (right) before the Faith and Modernisation session at the World Economic Forum on Wednesday. — Bernama

areas of cooperation to promote the declaration's economic agenda.

The Makkah Declaration was launched by the OIC in 2005 as a clarion call for reform and development in every sphere, including political, economic and social.

Through a 10-year Programme of Action, the goal is to bring human development and human dignity to the Muslim world, particularly the least-developed countries.

Abdullah said in the economic and social fields, the emphasis was on alleviating poverty, eradicating illiteracy, enhancing the quality of education, reducing disease and expanding trade.

The prime minister also touched on Islam and modernisation, saying Muslims were explicitly enjoined to pursue knowledge, which was the bedrock for progress and development.

He said it was also true that many Muslim countries were underdeveloped, and faced issues of poverty, illiteracy, and gender empowerment.

"Violence and instability plague several countries. The Islamic faith, however, has nothing to do with this," he said, adding that the distortion of Islamic teachings had held back progress in some countries.