



HIGH-LEVEL TALKS: Abdullah and Bush during their meeting to discuss bilateral issues in Busan yesterday. With them are (from left) Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. — Reuterspic

Malaysia to US: Play a bigger role

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BY ESTHER NG

BUSAN: Malaysia has urged the United States to play a bigger role in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Iraq issue.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it was perceived that the United States dealt with the two countries "inequitably", and this had brought about many problems.

"There are certain perceptions that the United States can influence Israel, and this matter can be resolved as soon as possible," Abdullah, who met US president George W. Bush earlier, told the Malaysian press here yesterday.

Abdullah said the issue had caused a

lot of problems to Muslims in particular.

The premier said he also stressed the importance of Malaysia's role in the rebuilding of Palestine and Iraq. Malaysia is chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

Abdullah said Bush told him that he wanted Iraqis to determine for themselves who their leader should be, adding that the US president had given the assurance that he would not take part in the process.

"I told him that this was a good thing," he added.

Abdullah expressed satisfaction over his meeting with Bush, saying it had given him the opportunity to voice his

opinions on several key topics.

"It was easy and smooth, and the talk was free-flowing," he said.

Bush, he said, had commended Malaysia on its efforts in capacity building.

"He also commended us on what we're doing for Islamic countries. I stressed to him that Islamic nations should understand that poverty, backwardness and ignorance could weaken them," Abdullah said.

The leaders also spoke about the avian flu, both acknowledging that it had serious consequences.

"We exchanged views, explored strategies and ideas and compared notes on what we're doing," he said.