

Play honest broker, US told

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Abdullah: Fair play key to solving decades-old conflict in Middle East

• By NST reporters
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PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. — The United States must play the role of honest broker if a solution is to be found to the prolonged strife and bloodshed in the Middle East, Organisation of the Islamic Conference chairman Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

Abdullah, who is also Malaysian Prime Minister, said the US must return to the rules of international justice and fair play if it wanted a solution to the decades-old Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the strife in war-torn Iraq.

In a strongly worded speech which found support from 14 GIG member countries attending an urgently convened meeting of the grouping, Abdullah said the US would fail the international community if it did not assume the honest broker's role and instead continued to support unilateral Israeli attacks on Palestine.

The unanimous verdict was that the meeting was a success. Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said: "We are glad that we came out with the consensus even on very difficult clauses that were included in the final documents;

"The mood and the spirit of today's meeting indicate that the OIC has a role to play."

Two declarations were issued at the close of the meeting. One denounced the escalation of Israeli violence in Palestine and called for a UN peacekeeping force in Palestine, while another called on the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution giving the world body a central role in Iraq's reconstruction.

Opening the one-day OIC Special

Meeting of the Middle East at the Putrajaya Convention Centre, Abdullah said together with the other members of the Quartet (the European Union, Russia and the UN), the US should use "the full weight of its diplomatic capabilities" and return to international instruments available, such as the road map and relevant UN resolutions.

"The rules of international justice and fair play call for and require all parties concerned to be involved in the process of finding a resolution."

The OIC condemned Israel's unilateral disengagement plan to with-

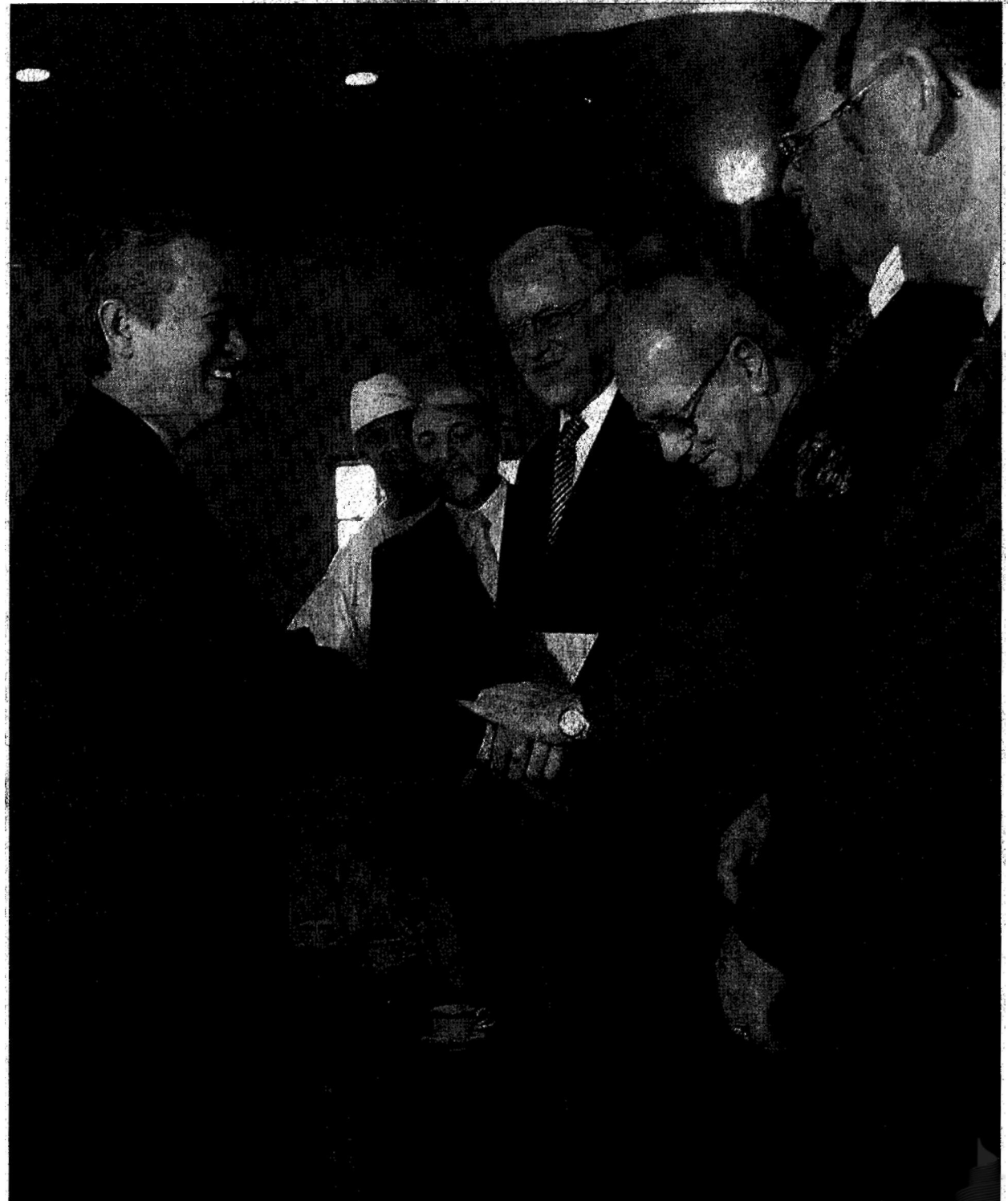
The rules of international justice and fair play call for and require all parties concerned to be involved in the process of finding a resolution.
— Abdullah

draw from the Gaza Strip, its killings of civilians and destruction of Palestinian institutions and its economy.

Abdullah said Israel was "emboldened and supported by outside powers", and its disengagement plan was contradictory to the provisions stated in the road map.

The road map was conceptualised by the Quartet in 2002 with the goal of creating an independent sovereign Palestinian State living side by side with Israel.

"It is essential that Palestinians be



HAND OF FRIENDSHIP: Abdullah greeting Palestinian Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi and other foreign ministers from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference countries.— NST picture by Hadzme Jaafar • SEE ALSO PAGE 2

• TURN TO PAGE 4, COL 3

PM moots proposal to seek justice for Palestine

• FROM PAGE 1

given the full right to have a say on matters that directly affect them. Our duty is to ensure that the issue of Palestine remains at the centre stage of international conscience." Abdullah said.

The meeting saw representation from 14 OIC countries and other foreign observers.

Abdullah suggested that a "people-based global movement", push Governments to seek justice for Palestine, asking participating OIC countries to consider how they could implement this.

He said although the circumstances surrounding the conflict were becoming more complex, the core issue that remained was state terrorism by Israel against Palestine.

"The question of Palestine is not a religious conflict between Muslims and Jews. It is about state terrorism, Israeli aggression and occupation of Palestinian land by force.",

On Iraq, Abdullah said it was appropriate for the US to table a resolution in the UN Security Council to give the UN a central role in Iraq, following the US' planned transfer of power to the Iraqi people on June 30.

"I am confident that all members of the

international community will support this move," he said.

He said it was also necessary that anti-occupation sentiments in Iraq be contained so that all hostility could cease in order for peace to be re-established in the country.

The 14 OIC countries attending the special meeting are Qatar, Malaysia, Senegal, Sudan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Guinea, Pakistan, Palestine, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Indonesia.

Discussions were held in two groups — the Committee on Palestine and the Committee on Al-Quds (Jerusalem).