

Thousands protest against Israeli aggression



Protesters gathering near the Asy-Syakirin Mosque before heading for the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre yesterday. — NST picture by Tun Izhar Tun Ishak

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KUALA LUMPUR: Several thousand people protested against US policy in the Middle East and brought their case to the doorsteps of the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre — where US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was huddled in discussions.

Led by deputy Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin and Barisan Nasional Youth leaders, the demonstrators broke through barricades, forcing riot officers, backed by mounted police, to form a human chain to keep them out of the centre where the Asian Re-

gional Forum was in progress.

They shouted "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great) and "Down with Israel, down with America" as they punched their fists in the air. They also paraded effigies of US President George W, Bush, Rice and British Prime Minister Tony Blair with Zionist symbols on their foreheads.

There were scuffles between Federal Reserve Unit personnel and the demonstrators before Khairy and several Umno Youth leaders were allowed past the barrier. They demanded to meet a United States representative to deliver a memorandum.

"I will not leave until I have

handed over the memorandum to the representative of the United States. I will not leave," he said.

The protesters then sat in front of the entrance and refused to budge until their demand was met.

At 4.45pm, the standoff ended after a US official accepted the memorandum.

Earlier, Khairy said all Malaysians — irrespective of race and religion — condemned the Israeli violence. He blamed the United States for providing weapons to Israel and sanctioning the violence.

"From the people of Malaysia, we do not welcome you here. You may be invited by the Government, but we do not welcome you here,"

he said, referring to Rice.

"What we are seeing is nothing less than genocide and murder of innocent people. This is not a religious issue — an issue of Islam against the West or Christianity. This is an issue that involves humanity because we are watching innocent people die.

"Israel says it is targeting Hizbollah, but why do we see a ratio so staggering? One Israeli killed for every 10 Lebanese. Are you really targeting HizboEah?"

Outside the US Embassy, nearly 2,000 Pas and Pas Youth members gathered to protest against the Israeli bombings in Lebanon and Gaza.