

Abdullah delivering his keynote speech at the United Nations University yesterday. — AP picture

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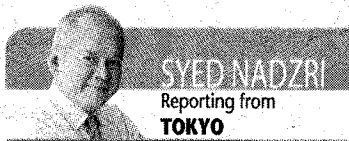
PM: Close divide between Islamic world and West

THE world must be brave enough to admit that the domination of Iraq by the Western powers and the relentless oppression of Palestine by Israel are dividing the Islamic world and the West.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said: "I have no doubt that a final resolution of these major problems in the Middle East will be a positive turning point in the relations between the two sides and bring about a sea of change in world affairs."

He said there were many facilitators with sane voices who wished to build bridges between both sides.

In his speech on Islam Hadhari at the United Nations University yesterday, he said the deteriorat-



ing state of affairs between the Islamic world and the world must be globally addressed because Christians and Muslims make up large numbers of the world's population — there are two billion Christians (32 per cent) and 1.2 billion Muslims (19 per cent).

"It is unfortunate that certain grave events in the last decade have brought the Islamic world and the Christian West to a defining moment in their relations.

"But we must not accept the proposition that these two great

civilisations are destined to clash with each other," he said.

Another deep-seated fallacy, he added, was that Islam was backward and undemocratic.

The speech drew many responses in the question-and-answer session afterwards, many wanting to learn about the Malaysian experience in promoting progressive Islam. Taking questions, Abdullah said there were many similarities between Islam and Christianity.

"We believe in the Holy Books, in the angel of the Bible, in the testaments given to Moses, we believe in the Psalms of David, these are the Holy scriptures the Muslims must believe in.

"So, why are we quarrelling?"

It is unfortunate that certain grave events in the last decade have brought the Islamic world and the Christian West to a defining moment in their relations.

Abdullah