

Put house in order first, PM tells Arab League

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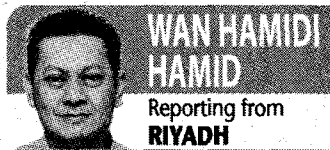
Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (right), Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf and officials from the Arab League at the summit in Riyadh yesterday. — Bernama picture

THE warring Muslim communities in Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon must put their house in order before asking other Muslim countries to help them.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said in the case of the Palestinians, if they wanted the Muslim world to help them they must work hard towards unity and to stop fighting each other.

"I am happy with the development in Palestine with the existence of the unity government (between Hamas and Fatah). This unity government must be supported as it is the government of the Palestinian people," he said when addressing the 19th Arab League Summit here last night.

With the full support of the Mus-



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lim world, he said, the Palestinian government could function well and would have less in-fighting and be united.

Abdullah urged the mediators involved in the Palestinian peace process, such as the United States, to be fair to both the Palestinians and the Israelis especially since Washington had always been perceived as favouring Tel Aviv.

"This is the perception. That's why I see the Arab League has the potential to be successful in achieving peace on the Palestinian issue."

The prime minister, speaking as the Organisation of Islamic Conference chairman, said the sectarian fighting in Iraq has not abated despite the noble intention of wanting to achieve peace.

"If the occupying troops are to leave Iraq, Iraqis must be united and stop infighting. They can rule their own country. It's a question of whether they want it or not.

"Iraq must be ruled by Iraqi people but the fighting must stop now."

Abdullah said Malaysia would continue to help needy countries, despite Malaysia's limited resources, especially in building human capital.

He said the poor Muslim countries needed economic and other forms of assistance instead of just

political solutions.

The summit revived its 2002 resolution of offering peace for Israel if it would return all the occupied territories captured in the 1967 war to the Palestinians and allow Palestinian refugees the right of return.

Israel is not keen with the right of return clause that could see millions of Palestinians returning to a new and independent Palestinian state.

Supporting the two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, Abdullah said the proposal must be seriously pursued as it was the agreement by all parties involved for some time.

The summit was opened and chaired by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah Abdulaziz al-Saud.