

PM's advice to Arabs gets positive response

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DATUK Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's exhortation for the Arabs to unite before seeking outside help has been described by some of his Middle Eastern counterparts as "sincere, brotherly advice".

Addressing heads of state and leaders of the Arab world at the Arab League Summit here on Wednesday, the prime minister did not mince words in pleading for unity among the warring factions in Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon, stating that disunity had foiled opportunities for peace in the region.

Local analysts agreed and accepted his view that the factions in troubled Arab countries should stop fighting before other Arab and Muslim countries could lend them a hand.

At a Press conference yesterday, Abdullah said he received positive responses from Arab leaders, including Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa and King Abdullah of Jordan.

"They expressed gratitude for my sincere and open advice.

"I believe, then and now, that the Arab world lacks sustained support on matters that need collective agreement," he said.

On whether his views would be seen as strong criticism of the Arabs, the prime minister said some might think so but others would not. He said a Saudi Arabian TV commentator had described his advice as a friendly and sincere opinion.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (left) in a discussion with his Lebanese counterpart Fouad Siniora on the sidelines of the Arab League Summit in Riyadh on Wednesday. — Bernama picture

"I believe my speech at the summit was a friendly gesture towards achieving unity and peace in the Middle East."

Abdullah hoped the Arab League would implement all the resolutions and not merely rest on its own proposals. He said he was optimistic that this time around Arab leaders would be more serious about finding solutions in Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon.

Abdullah, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) chairman, said the OIC and Malaysia had taken a similar

stand to that of the Arab League in resolving long-standing issues. Among them are the two-state solution for Israel and Palestine with recognised borders and on the right of return for Palestinian refugees displaced by wars and conflict.

"I share this view with King Abdullah of Jordan and also with Amr Moussa, who can see that there is a commitment towards achieving peace in the Middle East."

He also said Moussa admitted that the United States had not

been firm enough in leaning on Israel to agree with the Arab resolutions.

"It seems that the US is still favouring Israel. This is still the perception."

Besides meeting King Abdullah, Siniora and Moussa, Abdullah also met Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf, Indonesian Vice-President Yusuf Kala and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the sidelines of the Arab summit.

Abdullah returned to Malaysia last night.