

# "Pak Lah welcomes new Palestinian government"

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**MOSCOW:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has welcomed the setting up of the new government in Palestine but advised President Mahmoud Abbas to take the first opportunity to start talking to Hamas.

Abdullah, who is OIC chairman, said he spoke to Abbas yesterday on the telephone and told the Palestinian leader that such talks were important for the sake of Palestinians.

"He told me that he was doing everything he can to ensure a safe and stable situation.

"I talked to him (Abbas) after I was informed that he wanted to talk to me about the latest developments in Palestine," Abdullah told Malaysian reporters at a press conference here yesterday.

Abdullah is on a three-day official visit here.

Abbas sacked the national unity government led by Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh after the militant group seized control of Gaza.

Salam Fayyad, a former finance minister, has been appointed prime minister in a Cabinet which has no Hamas representative.

Abdullah said Abbas was within his right to sack the Cabinet and form a new one because he (Abbas) felt that Hamas had undermined the national unity government.

"He did not dissolve the parliament that was elected by the people. He just set up a new government. It was the right thing to do," Abdullah said.

Asked whether the formation of the new Palestine cabinet was a way to revive the stalled Middle East roadmap to peace, Abdullah said the cabinet must seize the opportunity to re-look at all the international programmes and agreement for peace.

On the lifting of sanctions and resuming of aid by the United States and the European Union to Salam's new government, Abdullah said it was the right thing to do.