

PM: We will help Iraq

Abdullah: Institutions of governance must be strengthened

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WASHINGTON: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has pledged Malaysia's commitment to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq.

"If the reconstruction of Iraq fails, not only will militant groups cement their presence in the country, the entire Muslim world would blame the invasion for setting off a chain of events to sustain misery for ordinary Iraqis," Abdullah said at US-Asean Business Council dinner on Monday.

He said that this would harden prejudices and aggravate hatred that would only fuel an entirely avoidable clash between the West and the Muslim world.

"We are prepared to rally support among Muslim countries for OIC's (Organisation of Islamic Conference) participation in rebuilding Iraq and strengthening its institutions of governance and economic system," he added.

He said that countries should not stand on the sidelines and watch Iraq struggle to find its feet.

"Muslim nations are underdeveloped, lacking any semblance of economic competitiveness and robust socio-economic institutions. Bad governance is the first vulnerability that radical groups exploit.

"The Muslim world must therefore realise that good governance is an essential component of the armoury against radical Islam," he said.



CANDID RESPONSE: Abdullah answering questions outside the White House on Monday as (from left) Malaysian Ambassador to the US Datuk Ghazzali Sheikh Abdul Khalid and Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar look on. — Bernamapic

On his economic agenda, Abdullah said it was aimed at identifying and nurturing new sources of growth.

He said while manufacturing and services were the mainstay of the economy, he had set out to develop a traditional sector,

agriculture, that had great potential.

"Agro-based industries, particularly agro-based SMEs, together with advances in biotechnology can turn Malaysia's abundant natural resources into a vibrant and

lucrative sector of our economy," he said.

Abdullah also called on US companies to set up their regional distribution and operational headquarters, and international procurement centres in Malaysia.

They should also consider setting up research laboratories, especially in the field of biotechnology, he said.

Abdullah described Malaysia as a principled friend of the US and was prepared to speak out with candour.