

■ **PM's caution:** Iraq and Palestine still central to problem

Terror threat still potent

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — A new generation of terrorists will be spawned and anti-Americanism will persist until Iraqis regain full control of their country and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is resolved, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He said the United States and its major allies must address these two key and unavoidable issues.

"Alarming, some of our post Sept 11 actions are alienating and radicalising even more people and breeding a new generation of terrorists in the Arab and Muslim worlds," he said at the Asia Pacific Roundtable today.

He noted that post-war Iraq "looks more and more hopeless by the day," with al-Qaeda-linked terrorists beginning to operate there and people worse off than before the war.

"We have opened a Pandora's box and we are now in a bind in Iraq," he said.

He also warned that the abuse and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners in Iraq and Afghanistan "will not be easily forgotten or lightly forgiven".

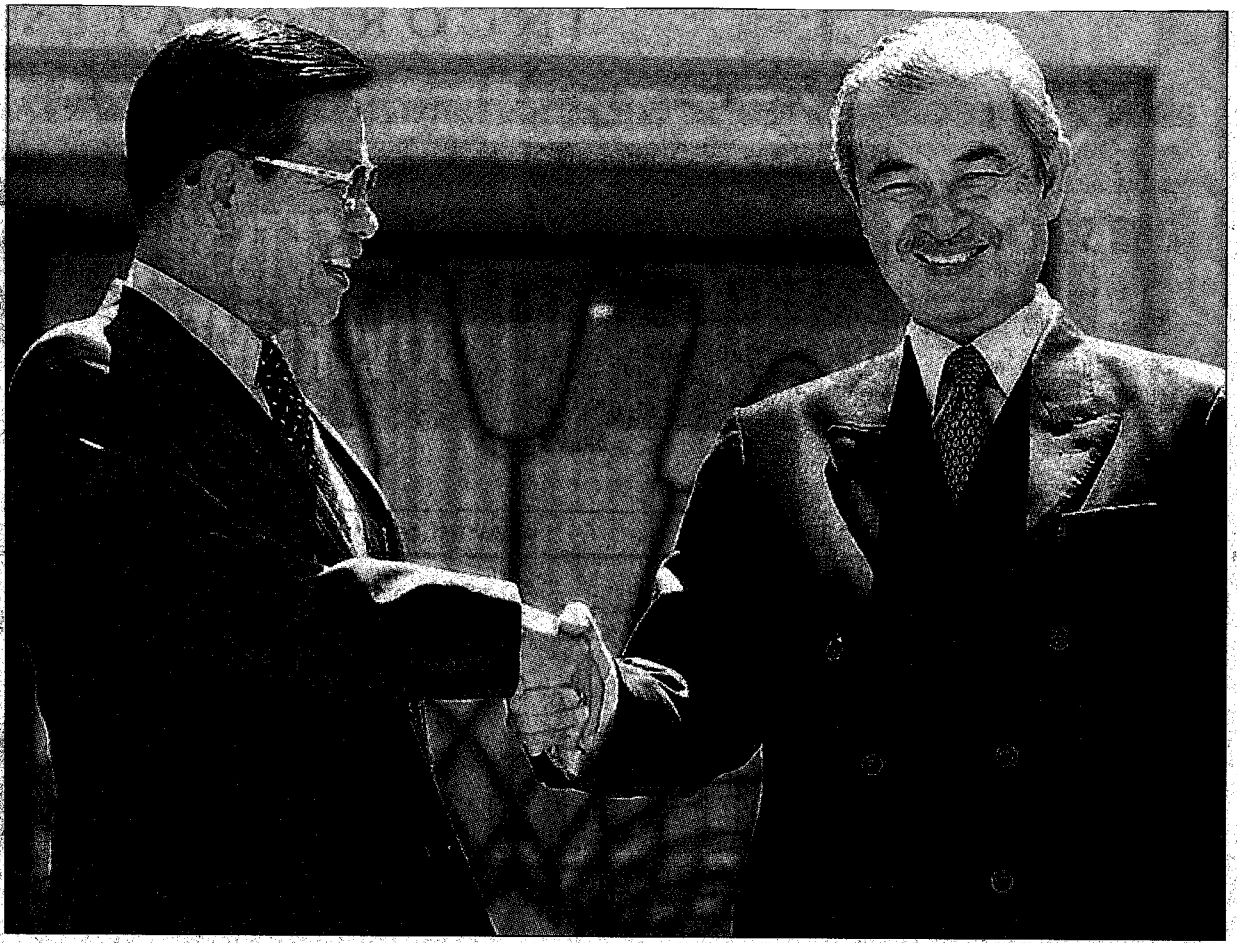
"The hatred they sow among the victims, nations and people will come back to haunt us," he said.

Abdullah is also chairman of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the Islamic world's largest grouping.

He said that if full sovereignty is to be granted to the Iraqis, they must have full control over politics, the economy and security. Also, foreign forces could only remain in Iraq at the pleasure of the Iraqi Government.

Abdullah said that Iraq had taught the world the pivotal and indispensable role that the UN plays in international affairs.

"We must cease to vilify and undermine it, for when it has failed it has been due more to the machi-



WELCOME: Abdullah receiving Khin at Perdana Putra Complex

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We need to bring UN back to the mainstream, says Abdullah

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nations of some of its members than anything intrinsically flawed with it," he said.

He said that the world should endeavour to remedy the UN's weaknesses and fortify its strengths.

Rather than marginalise the world body, the world should seek to mainstream it in international affairs, he said.

Another issue that needed to be resolved was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The peace process was in tatters and the road map all but shredded, he noted.

"International terrorism and anti-American sentiment, especially in the Arab and Muslim world, will not go away until the problem is resolved justly, morally and in accordance with international law and UN res-

olutions," he said.

Abdullah said that for the war against terrorism to be successful, Muslims and the world powers needed to snap out of their denial.

The Muslim world had to sever the spurious link some schools of thought and religious institutions had falsely established between Islam, militancy and the indiscriminate killing of innocent people, he said.

"Terrorism is the mortal enemy of Islam, not its consort. The legitimacy of the cause must not be tainted by the illegitimacy of the means," he said. It was also crucial that those leading the war on terror looked at the bigger picture.

"They will cite undemocratic governments, oppression, poverty and a militant form of Islam as the root causes. Certainly these all contribute to the problem. But why then do the

terrorists target the US or its coalition partners in Iraq as well as Israel, who have nothing to do with their undemocratic governments at home?"

The Prime Minister said that for the major powers of the world, especially the lone superpower, this moment of crisis was also a moment of opportunity.

"As the Chinese would say, crises challenge us to rise above ourselves and accomplish great things. Crises call for men of vision and exceptional leadership," said Abdullah, who returned from a five-day visit to China last night.

Abdullah said that the world should be courageous enough to embark upon a new course in the struggle against terrorism and in the attempt to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.