

# PM: Include non-Europeans as peacekeepers

NOT- 12/9/2006

PEACEKEEPING troops deployed to Lebanon should not be limited only to soldiers from the European countries.

As chairman of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Malaysia wants the number of countries in the deployment exercise to be increased, covering also those from Asia such as Malaysia and Brunei.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi made known the stance during a meeting with China Premier Wen Jiabao on the sidelines of the sixth Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem 6)

which ended yesterday.

China is a United Nations permanent committee member.

Speaking to Malaysian reporters covering the two-day biennial summit, Abdullah said he stressed the importance of having the number of peacekeepers increased as soon as possible to stop the suffering of the Lebanese.

"We want Asian nations like Malaysia and Brunei to be given the chance to play their respective role in Lebanon. This must be done fast."

Malaysia is still waiting for the UN green light before it deploys some 1,000 soldiers to the

war-torn country.

The Prime Minister also noted to his counterpart that the reconstruction of Lebanon should be expedited.

"We just cannot afford to let the civilians there continue to suffer and be deprived of development."

Malaysia also made known its stand that Iran had the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purpose but definitely not for the production of nuclear bombs.

On his meeting with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Abdullah said he expressed hope that bilateral relations between the two countries would not be af-

fected in any way following the government's decision to scrap the bridge project.

Lee was also told about the massive southern corridor development that will take place in Johor.

Abdullah also said he met Britain's Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott where discussions were centred on economic and education co-operation between the two countries.

Abdullah also met his Italian counterpart Romano Prodi where both highlighted the need to enhance bilateral trade in all fields, including tourism and capacity building.