

Stick to road map, Abdullah urges US

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WASHINGTON: Malaysia wants the United States, a partner in the international quartet to broker a peace plan in the Israel-Palestine conflict, to be committed to the road map.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that would be his message to US President George W. Bush.

"We would like the road map ... the quartet must stick to the road map. I think that is important because, perhaps, that is the formula that can bring about a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict," he said in a live interview with CNN here yesterday.

Abdullah is visiting the United States to meet Bush and senior US administration officials.

His appearance on the network's *Your World Today* programme, broadcast live at 11pm (Malaysian time), was part of his itinerary.

The Prime Minister said he would also ask Bush to persuade Israel to tear down the West Bank barrier, which the World Court recently declared illegal.

"We hope they (Israel) will adhere to the advice of the World Court.

"My feeling is that President Bush should try to persuade the Israelis to adhere to the advice," he told Zain Verjee, one of the two anchors for the world affairs programme. The other is Jim Clancy.

Verjee then asked: "Do you think he (Bush) will?"

Abdullah replied: "Well, I don't know whether he will or not, but it is my duty to tell him that is the best thing he could do."

In the 10-minute interview, Abdullah



CELEBRATION: Abdullah and Malaysia's ambassador to the United States Datuk Ghazali Sheikh Khalid cutting a cake at the ambassador's residence in Washington on Sunday to mark Abdullah's recent election victory. — Bernamapic

reiterated Malaysia's commitment to the war against terrorism.

"The United States is determined to fight terrorism and we will co-operate," he said.

Abdullah said Malaysia had decided to send a small contingent of doctors and paramedics to Iraq to help those in need. Asked why it was not deploying peacekeeping troops, he said: "It is too far for us. It is also very costly and Malaysia cannot afford it."

Asked whether more Muslim countries should join the multinational peace-keeping efforts, Abdullah said: "I do hope that countries in the Middle East are able

to send troops."

He also stressed that Malaysia would contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq in other ways.

When Verjee brought up the issue of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim seeking permission for medical treatment abroad, Abdullah said the treatment could be done in Malaysia.

"There is no reason to go abroad. We have experienced and capable doctors."

Apart from Bush, Abdullah will be meeting Secretary of State Colin Powell, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, Congress members and business leaders.