

# PM: Forum must bring warring parties together

NSF-27/1/2007

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Reporting from  
DAVOS, SWITZERLAND



THE World Economic Forum (WEF) got a dose of reality yesterday.

The annual event, which has a tagline of being "committed to improve the state of the world", must be bold and bring all parties in conflict to the table, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

The WEF has been criticised by some as being under-represented, with the notable absence of government delegates from Iran and even Hamas, the Islamist party in control of the Palestinian Authority.

"If you want to create better understanding, we cannot exclude any group from this.

"I'm just talking as a matter of principle, if you want to create understanding and provide a common platform, let everybody be there," Abdullah said in a briefing organised by the WEF yesterday.

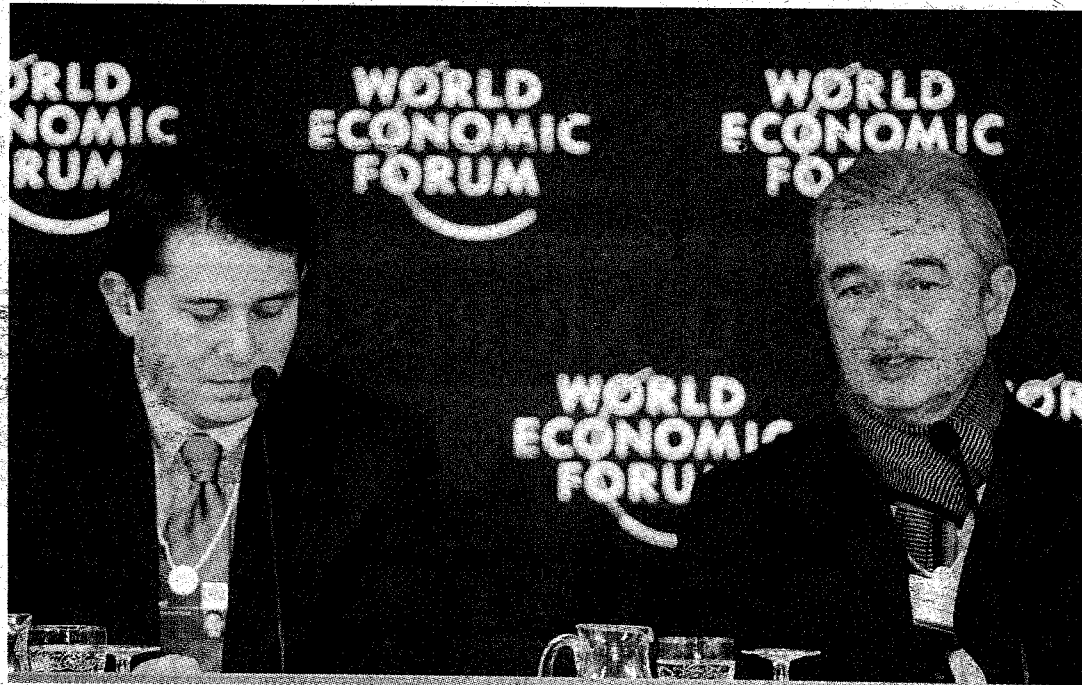
"But we must be tolerant and patient to discuss the issues.

"We must be brave to discuss them, we must be ready to hear what others say that may not be good to our ears.

"Because what you say may not be good also to their ears."

The WEF on Thursday brought Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to a session to discuss the Middle East conflict together with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Vice Premier Shimon Peres.

Western donors suspended financial support to the Palestinian Authority last year after Hamas, which refuses to recognise Israel,



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at a Press conference at the 2007 World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, yesterday. With him is WEF Director for Asia Lee Howell. — Bernama picture

swept to victory in parliamentary elections.

Abdullah also stressed his point that the United States should continue to handle the situation in Iraq despite a shift in its political leadership.

On Wednesday, President George W. Bush's plan to send more troops to Iraq was opposed by senators in a non-binding resolution.

Although the action was mostly symbolic, there is a likelihood that Democrats, who are in control of Congress, could introduce binding measures that could, for instance, cut funding for operations in Iraq.

"I believe the US, being a very big country, the biggest, most powerful, should understand they

carry a very heavy responsibility. Their role is to help solve it, their role is not to complicate."

Abdullah also appealed for better understanding among the Sunnis and Shias in Lebanon following Thursday's clashes that had left four dead and many wounded.

"Let's put aside our sectarian beliefs," he said, adding that Muslims should instead focus on more pressing problems like poverty and illiteracy.

"These are the real threats."

Bernama reports that Abdullah considered China a friend of Malaysia and part of the Asean Plus Three fraternity.

"We ought to do away with this talk of the China threat, there is no

such thing as a China threat. China challenges us, yes. We (Asean) have proven that today China is a friend and is a part of us (in the Asean Plus Three process)," he said at an open Press conference.

He also said he believed in the value of the Asean Plus Three and East Asian Summit processes as they epitomised the spirit of engagement rather than containment.

As on what he thought of the resumption of the six-party talks to discuss the issue of North Korea's nuclear programme from next month, Abdullah said the world should give the discussions a chance.

China, he said, was also playing an active role in them.