

Respect wishes of world governments, PM tells US



• By Jennifer Comez
news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi hoped the United States would not oppose any decision on the Israeli invasion of Gaza by a special meeting of the United Nations General Assembly.

The special meeting, held under Resolution 377, is due to begin this morning (5.30am Malaysian time) in New York.

The resolution provides for matters to be addressed immediately - by the general assembly in cases where the UN Security Council fails to act to maintain international peace and security, owing to disagreement between its five permanent members.

Over the past week, Malaysia had been making efforts to call for the UN special session to end Israel's incursion into Gaza.

Speaking after opening the new premises of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations here yesterday, Abdullah said the US played an important role.

"We hope they will not try and stop any motion that will be put forward. These are the wishes of the governments of the world and must be respected."

Abdullah expressed gratitude to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for fulfilling the requests for the special meeting.

At press time yesterday, Abdul-



A Palestinian woman confronts Israeli soldiers yesterday during a protest against Israel's offensive in Gaza in the West Bank village of Bilin near Ramallah. — Reuters picture

lah had not seen the resolution to be tabled at the special meeting but added that he expected Malaysia to be involved in the draft. Among the input that would be put forward by Malaysia's permanent representative to the UN, Datuk Hamidon Ali, would be for a ceasefire and access to humanitarian aid.

As to what the next possible steps could be if Israel continued its attacks on Gaza, Abdullah said it would depend on the special meeting.

"A lot also depends on the atti-

tude of the US. Israel usually waits to see what the US says. If President George W. Bush gives the go-ahead, they will persist with the attacks."

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim, who was also present, said the US was not expected to be silent.

"With their allies, they will surely try to soften the impact of the resolution so that Israel is not put in a tight spot.

"Soil, we are lobbying to ensure the US does not win in this matter," he said.

The prime minister agreed that too much blame had been placed on Hamas.

"Definitely. The motions put forward must also involve Israel getting out of Gaza territory. Don't only put restrictions on Hamas to stop its attacks on Israel."

The prime minister said he would make the opening statement on the Gaza onslaught at the special Parliament session to be convened on Monday and will be supported by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Rais will conclude the session.