

'Society can help by applying pressure'

KUALA LUMPUR: Sanctions must be applied to countries committing outrageously immoral acts, the prime minister said.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the international sanctions regime must be widened to include the Israeli assault on Gaza, which has taken a toll on civilian lives and is precipitating a humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territory.

The international community had a duty to ensure that such aggression did not happen, he said at the opening of the new premises of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) here.

"It is absolutely immoral for Israel to continue inflicting upon the people of Gaza an entirely disproportionate and excessive deployment of its military power."

Abdullah said governments could apply peer influence on each other, as could civil society within countries, to stay within certain norms of behaviour.

"Civil society within countries can exert sustained pressures upon their own as well as other governments to conform to recognised moral standards and be accountable for them."

Abdullah said he was happy that even as a relatively young nation, Malaysia had good relations

with the rest of the world.

He said Malaysia's present foreign policy should lay the foundation for the country's global position beyond 2020.

"We should be looking at 2057, when our country will reach 100 years of existence as an independent nation."

Some 4,000 diplomats and officials, including foreigners, have attended courses at IDFR since its establishment in 1991.

The prime minister also launched the Humanitarian Assistance Fund for Palestine and urged all Malaysians, regardless of race or religion, to contribute. All donations are tax-exempt.