

PM hits at Israel over settlements

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From Balan Moses

NEW YORK, Wed. — The accelerated build-up of illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied territories is an act of unwarranted provocation by Israeli authorities that constitutes a very serious and unacceptable obstacle to current peace efforts. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Malaysia, the Prime Minister said, wanted the Palestinian people to be treated fairly and justly.

"The plight of the Palestinian people touches the heart of every Malaysian. If what they do to protect themselves is considered criminal, then the same deeds committed by the Israelis should be considered equally criminal.

"Governments that kidnap people and kill them should be condemned even more than desperate freedom fighters who are forced

to resort to violence because they cannot seek justice in other ways," he told the 46th United Nations General Assembly.

Dr Mahathir said the Jews in the Soviet Union were better off there where they could use their entrepreneurial skills to good use to rebuild the country rather than returning to Israel.

On peace efforts in the Middle East, he said the current US peace initiative had raised the hopes of many nations, including Malaysia, for an active peace process that would lead to a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This settlement should also include the establishment of an independent state for the Palestinians, he added.

"We welcome the initiative and commitment of President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker in undertaking this difficult task."

On South Africa, he said the significant changes in the country should bring about the dismantling of apartheid and the start of negotiations for a new democratic and non-racial nation.

This, he said, would not have been possible without international solidarity and the key role of the United Nations in putting pressure on South Africa.

Despite these developments, international solidarity as manifested in the 1989 United Nations Consensus Declaration must be maintained to meet the challenges ahead.

Priority must be given to putting an end to violence in the black townships, reviving the preparatory process for constitutional negotiations involving the South African Government, the African National Congress (ANC), Inkatha and others.

The problems of social and economic inequities

brought about by decades of apartheid must be redressed, he said.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir had a breakfast meeting with former US Secretary of State Dr Henry Kissinger and media leaders. He later met Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez to discuss bilateral issues.

After a luncheon hosted by UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar for heads of Government, Dr Mahathir called on Mr Perez de Cuellar and the president of the UN General Assembly, Mr Samir S. Shihabi.

Today, Dr Mahathir will address the inaugural meeting of the Malaysia-United States Private Sector Consultative Group and the Asia Society before meeting editors and senior executives of the *Wall Street Journal*.

He will then attend a dinner hosted by the Malaysia-United States Private Sector Consultative Group.