

PM: Our stand depends on Israel

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's stand on Israel will depend on the Jewish state's attitude towards the Arab countries, the Muslims and Palestine, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"We will have to study this matter. If Israel has indeed changed its attitude then we may need to review the situation especially now that the Palestinians have recognised Israel," he said after opening the 14th Commonwealth Forestry Conference here.

However, Malaysia would need some more time to consider the issue of recognising Israel, he said.

He hoped that the Palestinian issue would be resolved through negotiations and not confrontation.

"I understand that the Gaza and Jericho accord is the first step towards many more negotiations," he added.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Arab countries should muster the required political will to ensure the success of a historic peace accord between the PLO and Israel.

He said countries which were involved in the long-standing conflict must also ensure that the accord would lead to a new era of peace in the region.

"Malaysia is in full support of the accord which allows Palestinian self-

rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho," he said yesterday.

Abdullah added that Malaysia had always proposed that the conflict should be ended through negotiations.

"We hope the accord will be the first step to lead to a complete solution to the Palestinian problems and in line with the UN Resolutions 242 and 338 which recognises the right of the Palestinians to self-rule."