

Israel wants to have ties with us, says PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad revealed yesterday that he has had correspondence with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin since the Tel Aviv regime started peace negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Front.

Dr Mahathir said there had been three letters and that Rabin was the one who initiated the correspondence.

"Rabin indicated in his letters that they wanted to start some sort of relations with us and what was happening with their negotiations with PLO and what they have done in the peace effort.

"But I replied that it was still not possible for us to recognise them, not until the Palestine question is resolved. They have indicated they want to have relations with us but we are still not convinced.

"We urge them to be sincere in their action," Dr Mahathir told reporters at the close of the

Umno extraordinary general assembly.

On reports that Melewar Corporation chairman Tunku Abdullah Tuanku Abdul Rahman and five other Malaysians had visited Israel, Dr Mahathir said he did not know anything about it.

"We have not issued any permission for anyone to visit Israel," he added.

The reports also said that Tunku Abdullah had talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Simon Peres and Rabin.

Asked if this meant that Tunku Abdullah was a private emissary sent by the Government, Dr Mahathir said this was not so "although I know Tunku Abdullah personally. It is probably for business."

On whether the Government would take action against Tunku Abdullah, the prime minister said: "We do not have a specific action to take against someone who visits Israel. There was the *Utusan* reporter who went to Jerusalem and we did not act."