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Mahathir - Israel

ISRAEL'S LEADERSHIP CHANGE WILL FRUSTRATE PEACE PROCESS

LANGKAWI, June 2 (Bernama) -- Malaysia feels the change in Israel's leadership will frustrate the West Asia peace process, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Benjamin Netanyahu's victory could turn out to be a setback for peace efforts.

"I also feel Netanyahu's victory represents a success for the Hamas group in its efforts to obstruct the peace process," the Prime Minister told a news conference here.

Dr Mahathir described the situation in the area as strange as both Israeli and Islamic extremists appeared to be cooperating to frustrate the peace efforts.

Everyone knew that extremists in Israel would not compromise just like Islamic extremists and when these two groups cooperated, it created a strange situation.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had not adopted any stand towards the latest developments in West Asia but was monitoring the situation.

Meanwhile in KEPALA BATAS, Penang, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in echoing the Prime Minister's views said Israel must be really sincere in meeting the demands and recognising the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Malaysia would observe developments in that country, he added.

Malaysia supported the struggle of the Palestinian people, he told reporters after opening the Kepala Batas Youth and Wanita Umno meetings.

Malaysia was nevertheless concerned that Netanyahu would adopt a tough stand towards the peace process, Abdullah said. -- BERNAMA

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