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500 Pas members `invade' Kelana Jaya cricket pitch

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - A cricket match between Holland and Canada was called off today when about 500 Pas youths, protesting against presence of the Israeli cricket team here, "occupied" the PKNS field in Kelana Jaya.

Israel was scheduled to play Gibraltar at the Kelana Jaya field but the venue was changed last night and the Canada-Holland match, to be played at the Rubber Research Institute grounds in Sungai Buloh, was moved to Kelana Jaya.

The match is part of the 21-day Carlsberg International Cricket Council Trophy competition.

Match referee and ICC official on duty John Reid said the match was called off for the safety of the players.

Reid, accompanied by Canadian and Dutch team managers, met Pas central youth council secretary Mahfuz Omar, who led the protest, and explained to him that the venue of the match between Israel and Gibraltar had been changed.

When Reid refused to disclose the new venue, the protesters marched around the field and gathered in front of the grandstand, forcing Reid to call off the match between Holland and Canada.

The protesters, demanding that the Government cancel the visas of the Israeli players, also damaged and burned several billboards.

"We will monitor the movement of the team and, if necessary, we will protest again - wherever they may play," Mahfuz said, adding that the protest was the third one by Pas.

He said the protesters had also brought along seven stones each.

A statement issued by the protesters stated that the Government's decision to issue visas to the Israeli team marked the beginning of efforts to start diplomatic relations with the country.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said that allowing the Israeli team to play here would show the Israelis that people from various religions can live together.

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