

24/03/1997

Dr Mahathir hits out at US veto

Hamisah Hamid

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday hit out at the US' move to veto last week a United Nations Security Council's decision to condemn Israel for establishing a Jewish settlement in Jerusalem.

It was the US second veto in two weeks and came four days after Israeli bulldozers, defying the international community, moved into the planned Jewish settlement site at Har Homa, known as Jebel Abu Ghneim to Arabs.

"We sometimes don't understand whether the US is sincere or not when it makes a stand. It condemns Israel for building the houses but when we want to protest, it doesn't allow," the Prime Minister said.

However, the US decision was anticipated. "That's why I always say we cannot depend on others to help us.

"Some people feel that the US must in the Far East to save us from China's and Japan's threats, but would they (the US) decide to help us if the assistance is not in their interest?"

Dr Mahathir spoke to reporters at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang on his return from Saudi Arabia.

He was also asked to comment on the Israeli cricket team which will take part in the International Cricket Council (ICC) Trophy competition which starts in Kuala Lumpur today.

He said the Government's decision to allow the Israeli cricket team to take part in the international match in Malaysia is to make them realise that the multi-racial and multi-religious community in the country can live in peace and harmony.

This way, the Israeli cricket players can explain to other Israelis back in their country about the actual situation in Malaysia.

"We actually intend to show to the Israelis that people of different religions here can live together without friction. That is why we bring the Israeli youths (the team) for them to see that the Muslims here do not oppress other communities," he said.

The Government, he said, hopes that the Israelis' presence in Malaysia will to a certain extent influence their thinking on the actions of the Israeli regime which oppresses the Palestinians.

"The Government has given its approval (for the team to enter Malaysia) and we do not propose to revoke it," he said.

Asked whether the Government's decision will reduce the diplomatic pressure on Israel, Dr Mahathir said it was Israel which had sought diplomatic ties with Malaysia.

Saying that he has written to former Israeli premier Shimon Peres and present Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Dr Mahathir said that "as long as he (Netanyahu) does not abide by the decision of the peace treaty (with Palestine), we will not have diplomatic relations with Israel".

Back in their own country, he said, there are Israelis who are demonstrating against the Jewish settlement in Jerusalem.

"Malaysia can do the Palestinians a favour if we can make more Israelis join those who are against the settlement," he said.

(END)