

24 MAR 1997

Cricket-Israel

ISRAEL STUNNED BY MALAYSIA'S HOSPITALITY

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24 (Bernama) -- Israel, seeking more international exposure for its cricketers, today thanked Malaysians and the organiser of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Trophy for the warm hospitality accorded to its team.

"We have a tremendous reception from the Malaysians and the organiser and we feel very excited and happy to be here," Israel's team manager Stanley Perlman told Bernama.

Perlman described Malaysia as "a good country" and his players did not have any problems communicating with the locals here and also teams from other countries participating in the tournament which starts today.

Israel's team, which arrived on Friday, is among teams from 22 countries participating in the 21-day tournament.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government agreed to let Israel play here to show its government and citizens that people of different races and religions could live in harmony without bloody conflicts.

The appearance of the Israeli team in Malaysia is unprecedented as both countries have no diplomatic ties.

Israel has never competed in any sports meet in Malaysia. At the Asian level, Israel last participated in the 1974 Asian Games in Teheran but was later roped into the European zone for various international sporting events.

The participating countries are East/Central Africa, West Africa, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bermuda, Canada, Denmark, Fiji, Gibraltar, Holland, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Scotland, United Arab Emirates, United States and Malaysia.

Malaysia Cricket Association (MCA) president Tunku Imran Tuanku Ja'afar had said that Israel's inclusion was a condition of hosting of the tournament here.

Tunku Imran said this matter had been explained to the relevant Malaysian authorities and the MCA sought and obtained official permission to have the team here.

Perlman said the tournament here would serve as a good exposure to the players and reflected the spirit of sports. -- -- BERNAMA

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