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Mahathir-Israel

MALAYSIA A GOOD EXAMPLE TO ISRAEL, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 23 (Bernama) -- The government decided to allow the Israeli cricket team to play in an international championship here to make them realise that a multiracial and multireligious society can live in peace in a country like Malaysia.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia hoped that the young Israeli cricket players would then inform their countrymen back home about the situation here and explain that Islam did not oppress or suppress other religions.

"We actually intend to show Israel and the Israelis that the different religious communities (in Malaysia) can live together without friction," he said when asked to comment on a report that the Israeli cricket team is among 22 teams taking part in the International Cricket Council Trophy which starts here tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir said the Israelies' presence in Malaysia would to a certain extent influence their thinking on the actions of the Israeli regime which suppressed and oppressed 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 decision reflected a change in Malaysia-Israel relations, Dr Mahathir said it was Tel Aviv that had asked for diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Israel.

He said he had written to former Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres and the present prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, saying that "as long as he did not abide by the decision of the peace treaty (with Palestine), we will not have diplomatic relations".

On the United States of America's decision to veto for the second time the Security Council's decision directing Israel to stop the establishment of a Jewish settlement in Jerusalem, Dr Mahathir said it was to be expected.

"We sometimes don't understand whether the United States is sincere or not when it makes a stand. It condemns Israel for putting up the houses but when we want to protest, it doesn't allow," he said.

"That's why I always said we cannot depend on others to help us," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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