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Syed Hamid-Palestine

PALESTINE SEES UNOFFICIAL MEETING FURTHERING ITS CAUSE

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar said his unofficial meeting with the Israeli Foreign Minister last month was viewed by Palestine as a move which could help further the Palestinian cause.

Syed Hamid said he was told this by Palestine Local Government Minister Dr Saeb Erilat, the main Palestinian peace negotiator with Israel, who accompanied President Yasser Arafat on a short visit to Malaysia two days ago.

He said Erilat considered the unofficial meeting with David Levy at the United Nations General Assembly in New York last month as benefitting the Palestinian cause.

"Erilat said it was good that as Foreign Minister and Malaysia being a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council that I voiced Malaysia's views on the peace process in the Middle East directly.

"This allowed Israel to know that not only does Palestine has the strong support of certain countries but that Israel was told too of the position of countries supporting Palestine on the peace process," he said after a meeting with German Minister of State of the Federal Foreign Office Dr Ludger Volmer here today.

Syed Hamid said Palestine was aware and had been informed of his meeting with Levy, which had been opposed by certain groups in Malaysia.

He again reiterated that Malaysia's policy of not establishing diplomatic relations with Israel as long as the Palestinian issue and overall peace in West Asia are not settled has not changed.

"We do not have to hide any relationship and change our position. Our position remains the same and the people should not doubt our position. We do not change our position by merely talking," he said.

On bilateral talks between Arafat and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Syed Hamid said Arafat repeated his commitment to the on-going West Asia peace process.

"Arafat informed of the many matters still hampering the peace process but he also believed that Palestine, together with the lands promised, will be an independent country in the end," he said.

Malaysia was the first Asean country to recognise Palestine and to establish diplomatic relations.

-- BERNAMA

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