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Mahathir-Israel

MALAYSIA NEVER ESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH ISRAEL, SAYS PM

SERDANG, Dec 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia never established diplomatic ties with Israel and does not plan to do so until the Palestinian issue is resolved.

He said those saying that the two countries had such relations were actually spreading lies and such action should not be resorted to, especially during the fasting month.

"I wish to say here, and please convey to your friends throughout the university that Malaysia does not have ties with Israel," he said when fielding questions at a dialogic session with students of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), here.

Dr Mahathir however said it did not mean that he cannot write to the Israeli leaders or for them to write to him.

"It's true (Benjamin) Netanyahu and (Ehud) Barak have written to me asking Malaysia to establish ties with Israel. The reply that we gave is that for as long as the Palestinian problem is not resolved, we will not consider such a possibility," he said.

A student has asked Dr Mahathir to explain whether or not Malaysia recognises Israel as a nation and bilateral ties between the two countries.

In his response, Dr Mahathir said, "I believe you are saying that Malaysia has ties with Israel because you are under the belief that we have ties with Israel. If you believe that we do not have ties, then surely you have no need to ask. But from the question, it shows that you believe we do have ties with Israel."

Dr Mahathir said that he did send a congratulatory message to Barak when he was elected prime minister but he was doing so with the hope that Israel would respect its agreement with Palestine.

"But it is clear they do not respect the agreement...that is why negotiations have ceased," he said.

The prime minister said that Malaysia's stand (not to recognise Israel) was clear even though some Islamic nations with a bigger Muslim population had established ties with Israel.

He said that Malaysia always strives to struggle for the right of the Palestinians at international fora and had been bold in doing so.

Responding to another question on the issue of Muslims branding fellow Muslims of being infidels in the country, Dr Mahathir said this should not be resorted to just because some people do not support or give their votes for certain people.

He said that Islam advocates unity and brotherhood and not divisiveness but there were many who seem to reject the brotherhood in Islam.

"We cannot say that so and so are infidels...it is not for us to judge. Those branding others of being infidels will soon become infidels," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that a thorough examination had to be conducted first before a person could be pronounced as infidel and this could only be done if he renounces his faith in Allah and Prophet Muhammad.

He cited the incident where posters were circulated at a university stating that a person is deemed to be infidel if he fails to vote for a certain faction.

"That's a big sin...punishment will be meted out in the hereafter. I hope this does not happen at UPM," he said.

-- BERNAMA

AR AHH RM