

# ***Israeli writer praises multi-racial Malaysia***

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**PENANG:** Malaysia's success story in promoting racial harmony can be used as a model towards resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an Israeli writer said here yesterday.

Israel Shamir, 50, who is also a translator and journalist, said the country was an "inspirational example" for him as Malays, Chinese, Indians and other races were living happily together despite their cultural differences.

Likewise, he said, Arabs and Jews should live together under one state with each having equal rights including "one man one vote."

"There should only be one State - not a Jewish State or a Palestinian State.

"We should avoid the imperialist tendency to divide a country such as in Cyprus or India and Pakistan," he said yesterday at the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) office in Jalan Masjid Negeri.

Also present was CAP president S. M. Mohd Idris.

Shamir, who is on a week-long "social visit" to Penang, had worked with Israeli radio as a freelancer and later in the Knesset (Parliament) as the spokesman for the Israeli Socialist Party, a minor partner in the ruling coalition.

Born in Siberia, he moved to Israel in 1969 and had served as a paratrooper in the Israeli army during the 1973 Israel-Arab war.

Shamir said he began opposing Zionism and the oppression of the Palestinians by the Israeli government after meeting with Palestinian refugees.

"I was sympathetic to Palestinians even before the war and over time took up the Palestinian cause," he said.

He said hostile Israelis were widening the gap between Jews and non-Jews.

Shamir said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was "very correct" in taking a vocal stand in supporting the Palestinian cause.

He also commended Dr Mahathir for proposing the gold dinar as the currency to be used for international trade, saying it was a good way to break the dependence on the US currency.

Idris said based on his experience, it was a first time that an Israeli visiting Malaysia had voiced a stand against Israeli policies.

He said Shamir had met Dr Mahathir in April this year and conveyed his stand on the Palestinian issue.