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Palestine-Visit

VISITS TO PALESTINE HINGE ON ISRAELI PERMISSION

PUTRAJAYA, May 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysians can visit Palestine provided they are allowed to enter the occupied territories by the Israelis who control the entry points, a Wisma Putra official said today.

"I should think that the Palestinians would most welcome those who visit them to see for themselves the sufferings of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation.

"But it all depends on the permission from the Israelis before one is allowed to enter Palestine," he told Bernama when contacted today.

The official said such visits would not mean that Malaysia recognised the Jewish state.

The Israeli government banned former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad from entering Jerusalem during his visit to the West Bank yesterday.

Reports from the West Bank city of Ramallah quoted him as saying that he was visiting the West Bank as a show of solidarity with the Palestinians.

Dr Mahathir admitted that it was not easy to visit Palestine as he had to face delays and was not permitted to go to Jerusalem, home of the Al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam.

He was also barred from touring the northern West Bank city of Jenin to see first hand the destruction suffered at the hands of the Israelis following years of Palestinian uprising.

Dr Mahathir drew the ire of the Jews when he said before retiring as prime minister in 2003 that they ruled the world by proxy, getting others to fight and die for them.

Malaysia has no diplomatic ties with Israel and has strongly backed the quest of the Palestinians for a homeland.

The official said Wisma Putra was waiting for a report from the Palestinian embassy here which should provide more details about the entire incident.

-- BERNAMA

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