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RECOGNITION AS ISRAEL'S CAPITAL

PM: JERUSALEM SHOULD REMAIN AS IS

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Dr M says Aussie govt's decision on holy city will only cause more anger

BANGKOK

JERUSALEM should remain as is and it is not right for any other country to decide that it should become the capital of Israel or be divided, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Bernama reported that Dr Mahathir said: "Australia also wants to divide Jerusalem into West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

"All these will only stir more anger," he said after receiving an honorary doctorate in social leadership, business and politics from Rangsit University, here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said this in reply to a question posed by Reuters' correspondent here on Australia's decision to recognise West

Jerusalem as Israel's capital. However, it was reported that the country will not move its embassy to West Jerusalem until a peace agreement between Palestine and Israel is achieved.

Last month, Dr Mahathir raised his concerns with his Australian counterpart, Scott Morrison, over the country's intention to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel during the Asean summit in Singapore.

"We noticed that the words used are carefully constructed. Nevertheless, in the eyes of many Arab countries, all these are not something that they can accept."

He said Jerusalem had always been under Palestine and questioned why they were making the effort to divide the holy city.

Meanwhile, Wisma Putra voiced its strong opposition on

the matter.

In a statement yesterday, it said Malaysia believed the Australian government's announcement was premature as it was made before the settlement of a two-state solution could be reached between Palestine and Israel.

It also humiliated Palestinians and their struggle for the right to self-determination, Wisma Putra said.

"Malaysia reiterates its longstanding position that a two-state solution, in which the Palestinians and the Israelis live side by side in peace, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, is the only viable solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

"Malaysia will continue to work with all partners to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict," it added.

The Palestinian leadership on Saturday described Australia's recognition of West Jerusalem as Israel's capital as irresponsible, saying it violated international law.

Australia became one of several countries to follow United States' President Donald Trump's lead in recognising the contested city as Israel's capital.

The Australian government said it would open a defence and trade office in the west of the city and Morrison was committed to recognising a future state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Both Israelis and Palestinians stake a claim to Jerusalem as their capital.



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison (right) announcing his government's formal recognition of West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in Sydney on Saturday. EPA PIC