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# Jerusalem should remain as it is, says Dr Mahathir

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*The PM says Jerusalem has always been under Palestine*

**BANGKOK** • Jerusalem should remain as it 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 (PM) Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"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 degree in social leadership, business and politics from Rangsit University (RSU) in Bangkok yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said this in reply to a question posed by Reuters' correspondent in Bangkok on Australia's decision to recognise West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

However, the country will not move its embassy there until a peace agreement between Palestine and Israel is achieved.

Last month, Dr Mahathir raised his concerns with his Australian counterpart Jim Morrison over the country's intention to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel



Dr Mahathir (right) receiving the honorary degree from RSU president Dr Arthit Ou Rairat in Bangkok yesterday

during the Asean summit in Singapore.

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

The PM said Jerusalem has always been under Palestine and questioned why were they taking the effort to divide the holy city.

"They have no right, it does not belong to them," he said.

Thailand's RSU yesterday

presented Dr Mahathir an honorary doctorate degree in social leadership, business and politics.

The university presented the honorary degree to Dr Mahathir at its 34th convocation at its main campus in the Mueang Pathum Thani district.

Dr Mahathir is the fourth high-profile public figure to be awarded the honorary doctorate degree by the university, after the late Princess Srinarindra (aka Somdet Ya) of Thailand; King Jigme Khesar

Namgyel Wangchuck of Bhutan (2009) and PM Shinzo Abe of Japan (2016).

The colourful award ceremony at the huge gymnasium building was steeped in tradition, with Dr Mahathir ushered to the reception room where he donned the red and black velvet doctoral robe.

Dr Mahathir's wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was given the honour to don the blue and red velvet robe and accompany her husband on stage. — *Bernama*