

# Israel bans Dr M from Jerusalem

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**RAMALLAH (West Bank), Mon.** — Israel today banned former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, whose comments have in the past infuriated Jews, from entering Jerusalem while visiting the West Bank, the Palestinians said.

Dr Mahathir was delayed for an hour at the Allenby crossing from Jordan into the West Bank where Israeli officials banned him from going to Jerusalem or the city of Jenin in the West Bank, Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia said.

"I want to say to the entire world that this is the political mind of the occupation," Qureia told a joint news conference with Dr Mahathir in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

"This is an important man, an international man and the Israelis prevent him from

going to Jerusalem, they prevent him from going to Jenin," he added, expressing his apologies.

The former Prime Minister had ruffled feathers in Israel just before his retirement in 2003 by saying that Jews rule the world by proxy, getting others to fight and die for them.

Dr Mahathir, who championed the Palestinian cause during his 22 years in power before retiring in October last year, said he was visiting the West Bank as a show of solidarity with the Palestinians.

"It was not easy to come here and I was delayed a lot. I can't go to Jerusalem. I tried to go to Jenin, but I can't," he said.

"I hope that my next visit will be to Jerusalem, the capital of the Palestinian state."

Sources in Qureia's office said Dr Mahathir would instead go to Abu Dis in an effort to catch a glimpse of the golden dome of Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound, the third holiest site in Islam.

Jenin city council said Dr Mahathir had been invited to the northern West Bank city to tour the destruction caused during the last five years of the Palestinian uprising.

It said it had asked Dr Mahathir to head an international campaign to rebuild the impoverished, volatile city.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli authorities which continue to control the entrance into towns throughout most of the West Bank as well as controlling the border into Jordan. — AFP



**STRONG TIES:** Dr Mahathir and Qureia (right) in Ramallah yesterday. — AFP picture