

**Dr M letters prove ties with Israel, PKR, PAS leaders say**  
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**By Clara Chooi and Mohd Farhan Darwis**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 1 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's just-released correspondence with three Israel prime ministers proves his repeated attempts to establish ties with the Zionist regime during his tenure, PKR and PAS leaders alleged today.

The leaders pointed out that from the three letters publicly released by Putrajaya yesterday, it was clear Dr Mahathir who had initiated the correspondence for the purpose of maintaining a relationship with Israel.

"Dr Mahathir has met and has established a relationship with Israel's prime ministers, even stressing repeatedly his intention to foster ties between Malaysia and Israel.

"This intention was made known in his letter to (former Israel PM) Yitzhak Rabin," PKR secretary-general Saifuddin Nasution (picture) said in a statement here.

In his letter to Yitzhak on December 21, 1993, Dr Mahathir had signed off by penning a hand-written message, saying, "I look forward to normal relations with Israel."

Over four years later, Dr Mahathir wrote another letter to Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu, condemning acts of aggression allegedly committed by the Israelis against the Palestinians and calling for ceasefire.

But the former prime minister had ended the letter on a friendly note, saying, "We would like to think that once we have established relations with you, it would be permanent."

Dr Mahathir expressed the same sentiment to Israel PM Ehud Barak in June 1999 in another letter urging for peace and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"It is my sincere hope that the attainment of a comprehensive settlement in the region would allow Malaysia to realistically envisage a positive move towards the establishment of normal relations with Israel," he had written.

PAS's Shah Alam Mp Khalid Samad agreed with Saifuddin that the letters, dating 1993, 1997 and 1999, had only validated the opposition's accusations against the Barisan Nasional (BN) for being Jewish sympathisers.

"Tun (Dr Mahathir) promised to establish ties with Israel should they accord freedom to the Palestinians... so he should be the last one to comment on (PR de facto leader Datuk Seri) Anwar Ibrahim's statement (on Israel)," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Khalid pointed out that Anwar's recent comment in the Wall Street Journal declaring support for "all efforts to protect the security of the state of Israel" had been issued in response to a question by a reporter.

Dr Mahathir assertions on the other hand, added Khalid, were expressed in a letter he had deliberately penned to the three prime ministers, which means the latter had the intention to establish ties at the time.

"This confirms that PKR has been saying all this time. Dr Mahathir and (Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Najib (Razak) must stop their pretenses.

"PKR will continue supporting all peace efforts in the Middle East and support justice for the Palestinians," Saifuddin said.

The Machang MP added that apart from Dr Mahathir, the now three-year-old Najib administration had continued the government's pro-Israel stance by hiring public relations firm APCO Worldwide to shine its image.

"Among APCO's advisers are Doron Bergerbest-Eilon, former Israeli security agency protection and safety chief," he pointed out.

PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub appeared to agree with his colleagues and demanded Dr Mahathir explain his correspondence in greater detail.

"Tun has released letters that clearly shows ties between Malaysia and Israel although both nations do not share diplomatic relations," he told The Malaysian Insider.

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