

Nazri says Dr M letters proof Malaysia does not back Israel
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 1 — The contents of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed's past correspondence with three Israeli prime ministers proves that the government did not support Israel, Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said today.

The defacto law minister said that the government's decision in releasing the letters written by the former PM was to dispel any doubts that the government was sympathetic to the Israeli cause.

"We know all along that the letters are not in support of Israel, we were telling them (Israelis) the position of Malaysia.

"The security of Israel is not important to us. We are concerned about the security of Palestinians," Nazri (picture) told reporters here.

PKR and PAS leaders have however alleged that Dr Mahathir's just-released correspondence with three Israel prime ministers proves his repeated attempts to establish ties with the Zionist regime during his tenure.

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.

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.

But Nazri came to Dr Mahathir's defence today, by stating "that ever since I was part of the Cabinet administration, I can assure that the former prime minister did not support Israel."

"I don't even know why this is an issue, I think it is because (Datuk Seri) Anwar (Ibrahim) is scared.

"He is like Iblis (the devil)," Nazri said, accusing the PKR defacto leader of concocting lies to confuse the public.

Anwar came under heavy fire for his remarks made during an interview with the Wall Street Journal, where he said he supported a two-state solution between Palestine and Israel and that he would recognise the Jewish state.

He had however stressed that the demands and concerns of the Palestinians were a priority and had to be addressed first.

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