

Najib: Jerusalem not under Israel

The Star - 18/5/2005 : 6

KUALA LUMPUR: The Israeli Government was arrogant in denying former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad the right to enter Jerusalem, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Deputy Prime Minister said such a decision should not have been made because Jerusalem did not belong to Israel.

"It should be an open city which can be visited by anyone," he said.

Dr Mahathir, he added, had only intended to see the situation there for himself and understand the problem in the hope of helping indirectly to bring about a political solution.

"A political solution is in line with what countries all over the world want," he said yesterday after presenting excellence awards to 100 people from the Defence Ministry in conjunction with Labour Day.

On Monday, 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 and Jenin.

He had been invited by the Palestinian leadership to visit Jenin and to see for himself the destruction there over the past five years.

Asked whether the ban on Malaysians visiting Israel unless special permission had been obtained should be lifted, Najib said it was not time to do so yet.

Meanwhile, a Wisma Putra official said Malaysians could visit Palestine provided they were allowed to enter the occupied territories by the Israelis, who control the entry points.

"I should think that the Palestinians would most welcome those who visit them to see for themselves the sufferings of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation."



WELCOME: Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmad Qureia shaking hands with Dr Mahathir during a meeting at his office in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Monday. — *APPic*

"But it all depends on the Israelis granting permission to enter Palestine," he told Bernama when contacted in Putrajaya yesterday.

The official said such visits would not mean that Malaysia recognised the Jewish state.

Malaysia has no diplomatic ties with Israel and has strongly backed the Palestinians' quest for a homeland.

The official also said Wisma Putra was waiting for a report from the Palestinian embassy here, which should provide more details about the entire

incident involving Dr Mahathir.

On Umno mulling over ways to curb money politics during party elections, Najib, who is the deputy president, said he was open to any proposals that could enhance the party's image and good name.

"Specific proposals must be considered very carefully," he added.

In his speech, Najib, who is also the Defence Minister, told the armed forces to always look at ways to challenge and improve themselves and offer better service.