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MAHATHIR: MALAYSIA NOT READY FOR DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH ISRAEL

SEPANG, Jan 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia will be unable to establish diplomatic relations with Israel as long as the Jewish state has not resolved its problems with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Syria.

The government, however, now allows trade ties with Israel in response to the state's apparent willingness to honour its agreement with the Palestinians, the Prime Minister said.

"If the Palestinians and others can... I don't see why we cannot gradually restore relations with Israel," he told reporters after visiting the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) project here.

Asked if the relations he referred to meant diplomatic ties, Dr Mahathir said "... not yet, as long as it (Israel) does not resolve its problems with PLO and Syria it is a bit difficult for us to establish diplomatic relations with Israel," he said.

This morning, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, during a dialogue with the media, said the Cabinet had agreed to allow trade ties between Malaysia and Israel. --Bernama