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Kamil - Israel '''

TIES WITH ISRAEL TO BE CONSIDERED ONLY AFTER PEACE PROCESS IS COMPLETED

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 26 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will only consider establishing diplomatic relations with Israel once the on-going peace process between Israel and Syria is completed, Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Tan Sri Ahmad Kamil Jaafar said tonight.

"We're monitoring very closely the outcome of the Israeli-Syrian peace talks, as we must be certain first that the peace process is moving in the right direction," he said tonight.

He was commenting on a Reuters report from New Delhi quoting Israeli Finance Minister Abraham Shohat as saying that he expected formal ties between Israel and Indonesia and Malaysia to be established soon.

Ahmad Kamil told Bernama: "The question of diplomatic relations does not arise until the peace process in the Middle East is completed and whatever agreement signed between Israel and Syria is implemented."

He stressed that Malaysia would not hurry itself into establishing ties with Israel until the problems with the Palestinians and the Middle East were fully resolved.

He said Malaysia would only consider establishing diplomatic relations with Israel based on the agreement to be signed with Syria and also the implementation of whatever principles agreed upon by the two sides.

"Then we can think of having ties with Israel," he added.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said before that Malaysia was not ready as yet to set up diplomatic relations with Israel.

"Until such a time, there's nothing much we can do. We'll wait for development from the peace talks with Syria. As long as this problem is unresolved, it's difficult for us to have diplomatic relations with Israel," Kamil said.

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry had already been instructed to study possible areas for trade with the Jewish state.

The minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz had said that the decision to consider trading with Israel was prompted by major moves towards peace in the Middle East since the signing of the Israeli-PLO accord on September 13 1993. -- Bernama