

Mukhriz: M'sian firms can trade with Israeli companies
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International Trade and Industry deputy minister Mukhriz Mahathir has reiterated that the government does not ban trade between private Malaysian companies and their counterparts in Israel.

Ships owned by Israel are also allowed to dock at Malaysian ports for trading purposes, on condition that Israeli nationals are prohibited from landing, Mukhriz said.

He was responding to claims by PKR-linked NGO Jingga 13 that ships belonging to a company once owned by the Israeli government have had free access to Port Klang's West Port.

Documentation revealed by the NGO showed that the ship Zim Atlantic, which had docked at Port Klang on Feb 16, had come directly from the Israeli port of Ashdod.

Mukhriz said the opposition has been trying to manipulate the issue to create misunderstanding of the fact that Malaysia has no diplomatic relations with Israel.

"No diplomatic relations means no interaction between the two governments. The existing trading is the operation of the private sectors from both countries and the Malaysian government does not prohibit it," he reportedly told Malay daily Sinar Harian in a text message.

"Statements by BN representatives that often say there is no diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Israel are deliberately twisted by Pakatan."

'Ploy to divert attention'

According to Mukhriz, the opposition has repeatedly raised the issue to divert attention from PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim's statement advocating Israel's security.

"The BN government does not recognise Israel as a sovereign country. This is far from Anwar's statement that defends the stand to ensure Israel's security, which means he recognises Israel as a nation," he added.

Likewise, International Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamad said he is aware that some companies conduct business with Israeli counterparts but said this is not endorsed by the government.

He said that "the nature of global business" is that some companies who invest in Malaysia may need to import components from countries with which Malaysia has no diplomatic ties.

"Otherwise, there will be no computers, laptops and smart phones.. The government does not recognise Israel. We do not support any direct trade with Israel," he said.

He added that some traders find "indirect" ways of obtaining Israeli products by purchasing from a third destination like Singapore.

"There is some amount of direct trade in the supply chain that the government cannot control," Mustapa (left) told the press at the Malaysia Investment Performance 2011 in Kuala Lumpur.

Anwar had been under fire for saying in an interview with the Wall Street Journal that he supports efforts to safeguard Israel's security.

This morning, Anwar explained to PAS spiritual leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat that his stand on Israel was consistent with that of the Palestinian political factions Hamas and Fatah.

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