

U GE 26-0100225 XB844

aae tbe

MALAYSIA TO HOLD TO LEGALITY TO RESOLVE BATU PUTEH ISSUE

Mahathir - island

bm

SINGAPORE, Jan 26 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia will hold to legality in efforts to resolve the issue of Pulau Batu Puteh with Singapore.

The government would have to scrutinise all existing documents on the matter and could not; rely only on history, he told Malaysian journalists here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir had earlier held a meeting with Malaysian ministers who are also here for the Asean summit which begins tomorrow. They include Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (Foreign), Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz (International Trade and Industry), Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik (Transport.) and Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik (Primary Industries).

+I agree that the matter be discussed by the Attorney General's Chambers and its counterpart in Singapore based on documents showing ownership of the island,+ he said.

+We must remember that Singapore no longer belongs to us because we agreed and signed an agreement giving away our territory, and we must hold to the legal status,+ he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the matter was among the bilateral issues that were discussed at his meeting with Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong yesterday. -- more

▼26/01/13-06MST

U GE 26-01 00185 XB845

aae tbe

Mahathir - island 2 Singapore

The Prime Minister said: +If we do not hold to legality, then we will have problems with everybody. For example, others may lay claim to our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

On claims by historians that the island belonged to Malaysia, he said: *We cannot hold to history at one moment and at another, when it is to our convenience, base our argument on legality.

+We must determine which of these (arguments) we want to use and then hold discussions. For me, that is the better way, and we should have sufficient evidence. +

On allegations by several Malaysian fishermen that they had been harrassed by Singapore security personnel in the vicinity of the island, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said investigations by Malaysian police proved the claims to be untrue.

Asked about a radar having been installed on the *island by the Singapore authorities, he said the facility was necessary to guide ships and to allow for monitoring of the movement of vessels in the area. -- more

▼26/01/13-25MST

....
aae tbc

Attention Reuter, here requested repetition

. Mahathir - island 3 Singapore

Pulau Batu Puteh is located 15 km off Teluk Ramunia, Penggerang, in southeastern Johor .

The dispute over the island emerged in the 80s after several incidents when Singapore marine police personnel were said to have chased away Malaysian fishermen from the vicinity of the island.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he and Encik Goh also discussed the second link between Gelang Patah in Johor and Tuas in Singapore, and the lease for the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) base in Woodlands.,.

He said that for the second link the problem to be resolved' was determining the highest point of the bridge above, the water and the deepest, point to facilitate passage of vessels of the RMN and Malaysian marine police.

These would be discussed by the technical committee on the project, he said.

Asked about the sharing of cost for construction of the link, the Prime Minister said this would be discussed +but in general we want the cost to be shared in accordance with the requirements of both sides.+ -- more

▼26/01/15-18MST

CNS6770

R GE 26-01 00168 E844

REPEAT aae tbc

Mahathir - island 4 (last) Singapore

.+Let's say, if the bridge on the Singapore side is shorter, this will have to be taken into account when determining 'toll collection. It will be necessary then for a formula to 'determine who gets how much,+ he said.

The Prime Minister said that so far the actual cost had not been determined yet but Singapore was prepared to pay a portion.

Asked when the project would be carried out, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia wanted it to be implemented as soon as possible because traffic congestion in Johor Baharu had grown beyond,, control.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir declined to indicate the cost to be borne by Malaysia, saying +there was government interest in the matter and that factor has to be considered+.

On the rate of lease for the RMN base in Woodlands, he said the matter would be discussed in the normal -process. -- Bernama

▼26/01/15-00MST