

Clearing doubts over steel plant

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By Syed Nazri

MALAYSIA is willing to clear the air with Taiwanese legislators who have expressed doubts about a move by China Steel Corporation to build a \$6 billion plant here.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that if the need arose, a high level committee formed some time ago to oversee the matter would be sent to Taiwan to

meet the legislators.

About three months ago, the Taiwanese parliament voted to freeze the planned move by the public-listed company.

Dr Mahathir was answering a question by Taiwanese legislator Wu Der Mei at a dialogue session with a Taiwanese delegation in Graha Makmur, Malacca.

Dr Mahathir said he respected the decision of the Taiwanese parliament but when Wu said that she was

among those who pressed for the freeze due to several uncertainties especially over the question of management control and incentives, the Prime Minister said: "We respect the decision of your parliament but if there is a need for further clarifications, we will be glad to co-operate in providing further details."

Dr Mahathir said he viewed the move by China Steel Corporation seriously since it was made known

about two years ago.

China Steel is one of the four major steel plants in Taiwan.

It is learnt that Johor and Terengganu are among the probable sites considered.

To a question on the possibility of a Taiwanese bank opening a branch in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said the move should be reciprocal.

He said the normal practice would be for Taiwan to also allow a Malaysian bank to open its branch there.