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KTM land: KL rejects Singapore's proposal

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Malaysia has rejected a Singapore proposal to refer their dispute over the Points of Agreement signed between both countries in 1990 to the International Court of Justice.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today the dispute over the POA relating to the development and status of the Keretapi Tanah Melayu land in Tanjong Pagar in Singapore could be resolved through negotiations.

Speaking to reporters after launching the Malaysia-Morocco Friendship Association, Abdullah said there was no need to refer the matter to the ICJ.

"A negotiated settlement is better since the POA dispute does not involve a specific treaty.

"It is in fact more of an MoU (memorandum of understanding)," the Minister said.

He said Singapore had officially submitted to him a proposal to refer the POA dispute to the ICJ and he had forwarded it to the Attorney-General's Chambers.

Malaysia is also prepared to have bilateral talks on other matters relating to the POA, including rectifying them, if Singapore expressed such a desire.

Abdullah said a settlement was attainable if Singapore sincerely wanted to negotiate and improve bilateral ties with Malaysia.

Several Malaysian officials were now in Singapore to discuss the relocation of Customs, Immigration and quarantine (CIQ) facilities for train passengers from Tanjong Pagar to Woodlands as from Aug 1.

On bringing a separate issue over the overlapping claims over Pulau Batu Putih to the ICJ, Abdullah said documents detailing the contentious matters were ready and had the consent of both sides.

In Johor Baru, the Singapore Government has rejected Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's assertion that the agreement on KTM land was not binding, adding that it was prepared to refer the dispute to the ICJ.

The Singapore Law Ministry, in a statement, said contrary to Dr Mahathir's claim, there was no need for the POA on the KTM land issue to be ratified by the Cabinet, Government or Parliament of both countries.

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