

Opposition backs govt stand on island issue

By NICK LEONG **STAR**

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PETALING JAYA: The dispute between Malaysia and Singapore over the sovereignty of Pulau Batu Putih has galvanised the opposition parties to stand side-by-side with the Government.

PAS, DAP and Parti Keadilan Nasional have all backed the Government's stand in dealing with Singapore over the issue.

PAS secretary-general Nasharuddin Mat Isa said the party was at one with the Government on the country's sovereignty.

"We are behind the Government all the way in this. We urge the Government to stand firm on what is rightly ours," he said in an interview yesterday.

He said the Government was right in not responding to the "provocation" by Singapore in asserting its rights over the island.

"There is no need for military action which will not benefit anyone," he said.

DAP deputy chairman Karpal Singh said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's response to Singapore's

"militant stand" was noteworthy.

"Although statemanslike, (it) will in all likelihood only encourage Singapore to further trample on the sensitivities of Malaysians," he said.

Karpal said territorial sovereignty had to be defended at all cost "lest the aggressor assumes patience and diplomacy a sign of weakness."

He said the Government should insist that Singapore cease construction work and withdraw from its occupation of Pulau Batu Putih.

"If it has a legitimate claim, it should prove it in a proper forum, which is the ICJ (International Court of Justice)," he said.

Keadilan secretary-general Sahri Bahari said Wisma Putra should summon Singapore's envoy to explain the action by the republic's navy.

"We feel it is unbecoming of Singapore to build facilities on the island and showing off its military might while the ownership of the island is still in doubt," he said.

He said Keadilan supported the Government's position of solving island ownership dispute through the ICJ.