

# Singapore: No offer to halt reclamation

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PETALING JAYA: Singapore has denied reports that it had offered to halt its land reclamation exercise at the Johor Straits during a visit here by its Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong last month.

A Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman said all that was offered by Lee was to "carefully consider" Malaysia's note of concern.

"It is incorrect to state that Lee had offered to consider halting the reclamation. During his visit to Malaysia, he had said that all the reclamation work was being carried out within Singapore's territorial waters and in accordance with international law.

"Lee also stated that if Malaysia had concerns, they could send us a note and we would consider it," the unnamed spokesman said in a statement issued by the

Singapore High Commission here yesterday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had on Friday expressed regret that Singapore was going ahead with its land reclamation exercise despite a protest by Malaysia that the exercise would negatively affect the narrow waterway.

He said he was taken aback by the latest decision by Singapore because Lee had stated that the republic would resolve the matter with Malaysia.

The spokesman also clarified that a statement made by its National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan regarding land reclamation recently was a general statement of policy.

"It was not related to specific issues raised by the Malaysians."