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Mahathir-Singapore

DR MAHATHIR WANTS SINGAPORE'S COOPERATION ON RECLAMATION ISSUE

SHAH ALAM, March 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today criticised Singapore for refusing to cooperate with Malaysia in resolving the issue of land reclamation in the Straits of Johor.

"If they do as they wish, we too can do as we wish," he told a news conference after launching the Selangor Barisan Nasional convention here.

The Malaysian government, he said, hoped that Singapore could give its cooperation on the issue which was vital if the latter expects the same from Malaysia.

"We hope that Singapore will cooperate," he said when asked to comment on the recent statement by Singapore National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan that the city state would continue with its reclamation work to meet the increasing demand for land.

In a Parliamentary speech released yesterday, Mah said that Singapore would continue to carry out land reclamation despite complaints from Malaysia that such works at the narrow Straits of Johor separating the two countries would disrupt shipping access and the environment.

The remark has triggered anxiety in Malaysia, which has been protesting against the reclamation work because it may affect marine life and "narrow the sea lane to the Pasir Gudang Port and the Port of Tanjung Pelepas."

Kuala Lumpur plans to submit a note to Singapore containing proof of the negative effects of the reclamation work on Malaysia and has requested the latter to stop the reclamation activities.

Dr Mahathir said that Kuala Lumpur finds it difficult to get Singapore to even temporarily stop the reclamation work especially when two Singapore ministers had given conflicting signals.

"When its Deputy Prime Minister came here, he said that he'll consider but another minister said that it will continue. So it's quite difficult," he said.

Asked whether the Cabinet has received the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report on the reclamation work that would later be submitted to the Singapore government, he said: "It's not ready yet."

"It takes some time to conduct an EIA study," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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