

09/03/2002

Malaysia seeks assurance (HL)

Abdul Razak Ahmad; Ridzal A. Latiff

SIK, Fri. - Malaysia will seek an assurance from Singapore that the republic's land reclamation activities in the waters bordering Johor will not affect the deep water line demarcating the boundaries between the two countries, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the reclamation work could affect the depth of the deep water line and this would adversely affect shipping.

"We realise that Singapore has the right to reclaim land in their territory. The problem is our border consists of a deep-water line because this line is suitable for shipping.

"If reclamation is conducted, even in Singapore, it will affect the depth of this water line and this will adversely affect our shipping route.

"Because of this we feel that Singapore must take this factor into account and give us an assurance that their reclamation work will not affect the deep water line," he said after attending a Meet-the-People gathering (Majlis Ramah Mesra) at the Sik District Council field here.

The Prime Minister said this when asked on the Government's stand on the reclamation activities. He said the Foreign Ministry would examine the matter to find out how such an assurance can be sought.

Asked whether Malaysia would issue a protest notice to the Singapore Government concerning the matter, Dr Mahathir said the Government had summoned Singapore's High Commissioner here to express Malaysia's displeasure.

On whether Singapore's land reclamation work constituted a long-term effort by the neighbouring country to jeopardise operations at Johor's Tanjung Pelepas Port (PTP) so that ships would utilise facilities in Singapore instead, Dr Mahathir replied:

"I don't think that is their intention, but we realise ships that want to enter Pasir Gudang must go through Singapore waters, some of which are deep and which could also be affected by the reclamation conducted at Pulau Tekong."

On whether the Malaysian Government would bring up the matter in the International Court of Justice if it failed to resolve the issue, Dr Mahathir said: "We have not reached that stage yet. We still have a case with Singapore regarding the claims on Pulau Batu Putih."

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