

08 MAR 2002

Mahathir-Singapore

M'SIA WANTS ASSURANCE FROM S'PORE OVER ITS LAND RECLAMATION MOVE

SIK, March 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia wants an assurance from Singapore that the republic's move to conduct land reclamation within its territory does not affect the Johor Straits' deepest point.

He said that the assurance was crucial as the deepest point was vital for shipping.

Even though Singapore has a right to conduct land reclamation within its territory, it could affect the Straits' deepest point and detrimental to shipping, he said.

"Singapore need to take all these factors into account," he told reporters after a meet-the-people session here.

He said that the Foreign Ministry was making efforts to obtain this assurance from the republic.

Singapore has been reclaiming land at Pulau Tekong for the past several years.

Dr Mahathir said that the Foreign Ministry had summoned the Singapore high commissioner to convey the country's displeasure over the matter.

Singapore had yet to provide feedback on the issue, he said.

Asked whether the reclamation move by Singapore would affect the shipping lane to Pasir Gudang Port in Johor, the Prime Minister said that he did not think so.

On the possibility that the matter be referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), he said: "It has not reached that stage yet. Malaysia and Singapore still have the claim on Pulau Batu Putih pending in the ICJ."

Asked to comment on the statement by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong that the Malaysian media was playing up the issue, he said that even though the reclamation works were being conducted within the republic's territory, it could affect the Straits' deepest point and also the country.

-- BERNAMA

JM RM