

31 MAR 2002

Reclamation

NO OFFER TO HALT RECLAMATION WORKS, SAYS S'PORE FOREIGN OFFICE

KUALA LUMPUR, March 31 (Bernama) -- Singapore's Foreign Affairs Ministry said that it is incorrect to state that its Deputy Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, offered to consider halting the republic's land reclamation programme during his recent visit to Malaysia.

Its spokesman clarified that during discussions with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and other leaders, Lee had said that all the reclamation works were being carried out within Singapore's territorial waters and in accordance with international law.

"Lee also stated that if Malaysia has concerns, they could send us a note on their concerns and we will consider it. The Malaysian leaders agreed to do so.

"This position stands. When Malaysia sends us their note, Singapore will carefully consider it," the spokesman said in a statement dated yesterday and released through the Singapore High Commission here today.

He was responding to media queries on further Malaysian press reports on the reclamation issue, specifically that Malaysian leaders have criticised Singapore as "uncooperative" and cited Singapore's announcement on March 27 that it will continue to reclaim land in the narrow Tebrau Straits, apparently referring to National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan's Addendum to the President's Address at the opening of Singapore Parliament.

The spokesman said that Mah's Addendum, like other Ministerial Addenda, was a general statement of policy.

He noted that in the context of Land Use Policies, it states: "To meet the increasing demand for land, MND (Ministry of National Development) will also continue our land reclamation programme from out territorial waters."

This statement, he said, was not related to specific issues raised by the Malaysians.

The spokesman said that Singapore also wanted a cooperative relationship with Malaysia.

"But in any relationship, to resolve bilateral problems, we need to have a firm basis to work on. The premise must be based on facts and on international law," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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