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Ghani-Singapore

SINGAPORE PURPOSELY CONTINUES WITH LAND RECLAMATION, SAYS GHANI

JERTIH, March 30 (Bernama) -- Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said Singapore was continuing with land reclamation works despite protests from Malaysia probably because it was looking after its economic interest.

He said this was because the economy of the island republic was slightly affected following the creation of Pasir Gudang Port in Johor.

"It's apparent that the land reclamation works are aimed at narrowing the shipping lane to Pasir Gudang Port which is now a threat to the republic's economy," he told reporters after opening the Besut Umno Youth delegates meeting, here today.

Press reports today carried a statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad criticising Singapore for refusing to relent and proceeding with land reclamation works in the Straits of Tebrau that affected the common waters shared between Malaysia and Singapore.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on the statement by Singapore's National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan who was reported as having told the republic's parliament that Singapore would continue with the land reclamation works despite criticisms from Malaysia which feared that such works would affect the shipping lane and environment around the straits.

Abdul Ghani said Singapore should give serious thought to what was said by the Malaysian Prime Minister because the move taken by the republic had much implication and was of great concern to the people of Johor.

He said the rapid development in Johor in the last few years had made Singapore feel that the state was competing with the republic's economy.

"Since the construction of Pasir Gudang Port, Singapore is said to have lost 15 per cent in terms of port revenue over the last two years.

"This makes them feel that Johor is a competitor, no longer as a complement to its economy," he said.

Abdul Ghani said Singapore should accept the fact that Johor's position as a port was strategic compared to Jurong which was now lagging far behind.

Meanwhile in KOTA TINGGI, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Singapore should stop the land reclamation works as its Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had assured the Malaysian government that the republic would consider the protest made by Malaysia.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia felt that the land reclamation and the issue would ease following the assurance instead of the contrary as Singapore continued with reclamation works.

"They should at least respect us and stop reclamation works temporarily until we present our protest," he told reporters.

He said Singapore should show their interest and willingness to resolve the matter amicably.

BERNAMA

MNY AO