

Focus shifts to islands

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Singapore starting campaign to disrupt KL-Jakarta ties

THE current relationship between Malaysia and Singapore commanded considerable coverage by the Malay press.

Berita Harian focused on an article in a Singapore daily which reported what was deemed to be Malaysia's conduct *vis a vis* Indonesia in the dispute over Sipadan and Ligitan islands.

Accusing the *Straits Times* of starting a campaign to disrupt Kuala Lumpur-Jakarta relations, the Malay daily reported that the Singapore paper was saying that Indonesia had challenged a statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Malaysia had not acted aggressively

towards Indonesia throughout the Sipadan and Ligitan dispute.

Berita Harian said the report was deliberately trying to legitimise the actions of Singaporean authorities in trying to prevent Malaysians from entering the waters around Pulau Batu Puteh.

Quoting Indonesian intelligence sources, the Singaporean report said Malaysia had gone ahead to develop resorts on Sipadan despite diplomatic protests from Jakarta.

The report also quoted a senior intelligence officer as saying that Malaysian security personnel had fired shots in the direction of Indonesian

forces when they came close to the island.

The officer said Indonesian forces were always ordered to withdraw to avoid conflict. He was also quoted as saying that such incidents were reported to the Indonesian government, but never made public for diplomatic reasons.

The report also said Indonesian civilians faced a lot of difficulty trying to reach Sipadan.

Utusan Malaysia reported Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman as saying that the conduct of Singapore leaders was merely to deflect the attention of the republic's

citizens away from its economic woes.

Ghani said it would be better for Singaporeans to focus on solving their problems than issuing statements that were not neighbourly.

He referred to reports that there were 90,000 people who were unemployed in the republic last year and there was also a lack of foreign investments coming to Singapore.

Ghani also said the Johor Government would adhere to the two water supply agreements between Malaysia and Singapore, which allowed the state to stop supplying water in 2011 and 2061.