

PM: S'pore must stop work

STAR - 9 OCT 2009

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PETALING JAYA: Singapore must stop reclamation work now pending a final decision by the Tribunal, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"If they continue with their work, it will be too late. By the time we have a final decision, the reclamation might have done permanent damage. For us, what we want is for them to stop work now, and then we go for the final decision," he told reporters upon his return from Bali last night.

Dr Mahathir added that the Government would study the decision thoroughly.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, who was also present, said Malaysia had proven its case as the Tribunal had agreed for a group of experts to determine whether the reclamation work had affected the environment.

According to a Wisma Putra statement, the Tribunal announced that Malaysia had been granted provisional measures in the case.

In particular, it said, the arbitrary tribunal unanimously ordered Singapore "not to conduct its land reclamation in ways that might cause irreparable prejudice to the rights of Malaysia or serious harm to the marine environment, taking especially into account the reports of the group of independent experts."

It said the Tribunal also unanimously ordered both parties to establish a group of independent experts to conduct a jointly-funded study on the impacts of the land reclamation projects, including a rapid interim report on infilling works in Area D south of Pulau Tekong.

The joint study would include all Singapore's current land reclamation projects, it added.

However, it said the Tribunal did not consider it necessary to indicate any provisional measure relating to Malaysia's claim to Point 20 at Tuas.

In the course of making these orders, it said the Tribunal rejected all of Singapore's preliminary objections and other technical objections relating to the proceedings.

It expressed unanimously the clear view that Malaysia was justified in commencing the proceedings and that there was *prima facie* jurisdiction over the dispute, it added.

It noted: "An assessment concerning the impact of the land reclamation works on waters under the jurisdiction of Malaysia has not been undertaken by Singapore."

Singapore's application for costs of the proceedings was also dismissed, Wisma Putra pointed out.