

Panel of experts to be formed after OIC

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KUALA LUMPUR: Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Malaysia will attend to the setting up of the group of independent experts to monitor Singapore's reclamation works after the 10th session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Putrajaya.

He said the establishment of the group, prescribed by Malaysia and Singapore by the Hamburg-based International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (Itlos) to study the effects of the reclamation works and to propose measures to deal with any adverse effects, was entirely the responsibility of Wisma Putra.

"Now Wisma Putra is busy with the OIC Summit ... later, afterwards, when we have settled down, we will decide who is to be in the team," he told reporters after launching a book on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad entitled *Mahathir: 22 years, 22 voices* here.

Asked when exactly the group would be formed, Abdullah said he did not want to predict the date, but it would not take a long time.

Malaysia filed for international adjudication for provisional measures on Sept 5 pending the hearing of the arbitration tribunal over the reclamation activities by the republic. Itlos conducted a three-day hearing from Sept

25 and delivered its judgment on Wednesday.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said it would be better if the panel could be set up as soon as possible as both sides was given only one year to do it.

"So far Singapore hasn't talked to us (about it), we have not talked to Singapore either

... as the case was heard only two days ago," he said after launching the International Media Centre for the summit at the Putrajaya Convention Centre here.

"The experts are not plucked from the sky, we must ensure that the two parties are satisfied and we are trying to find a solution that will pro-

vide a win-win situation as both parties must benefit, this is for our future generation," he said.

"On top of that, there is a mechanism for regular exchange of information between the two countries, so now we have to sit down with Singapore to work out the details."

SUNPIX BY MOHAMAD AZHA ARIEF