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Syed Hamid-S'pore

M'SIA TO CONSIDER S'PORE-PROPOSED DATES FOR SIGNING SPECIAL AGREEMENT

PUTRAJAYA, Jan 3 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will consider the date of Jan 27 or 28 which Singapore has proposed for signing the Special Agreement to bring their Pulau Batu Puteh dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

He said Kuala Lumpur might propose another date if those suggested by Singapore were found to be unsuitable.

Syed Hamid said the proposed dates, which coincide with the Asean-EU Meeting in Brussels, Belgium, were contained in a note he received from Singapore today.

"If we don't agree with the dates, we will suggest another date," he told reporters at the ministry's Aidilfitri reception here, which was also attended by representatives of foreign missions.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia had earlier written to the Singapore government proposing several dates for the signing but the republic did not agree.

"We wrote to them several times and proposed many dates last year; six or seven dates were proposed," he said, adding that the last time was last November.

Syed Hamid said it would not be right to assume that once a date was given by Singapore it would become acceptable to Malaysia.

"It is the first response that I have. So, we'll look how (it goes). If I'm around during that time, of course we can, otherwise we will propose another date," he said.

The minister said he had not decided whether or not to attend the Brussels meeting as he would have a tight schedule during that period.

At that time he would be coming back from a visit to Lebanon and would be busy with preparations for next month's Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysia and Singapore have been locked in dispute over ownership of Pulau Batu Puteh, a rocky outcrop lying just 7.7 nautical miles off Johor and 25 nautical miles from Singapore.

On another matter, Syed Hamid clarified that he had been misquoted by a Malay daily on his response in Kuala Terengganu yesterday to a question about Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's New Year message.

Dr Mahathir had said that there were already arrogant countries claiming that they had the right to take pre-emptive action or forward defence that would affect Malaysia.

In the daily's article, Syed Hamid was quoted as saying that the country meant by Dr Mahathir was Singapore.

"I said the PM's speech is good to remind Malaysians to be vigilant at all times and to understand the need for the protection of our sovereignty and integrity," Syed Hamid said.

-- BERNAMA

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