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Syed Hamid-Reclamation

FRAMEWORK FOR M'SIA-S'PORE PANEL OF EXPERTS TO BE SCRUTINISED

KOTA TINGGI, Nov 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Singapore will scrutinise the various policies and framework of the joint panel of independent experts created to monitor the land reclamation works at Pulau Tekong and Tuas, at the second meeting of senior officials soon.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today the discussion among senior officials of both countries was scheduled to be held in Putrajaya in December or January next year.

"The discussion this time will scrutinise the various policies and framework agreed upon by both parties at their first meeting in Putrajaya last Saturday before they can be fully implemented," he told reporters at a Hari Raya open house at his residence in Jalan Lombong, here today.

He said that the first meeting had agreed to appoint a joint panel of independent experts to implement the report from the study on the effects of the land reclamation following the decision of the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) which sat in Hamburg, Germany on Oct 8.

In its decision, ITLOS among other things directed Singapore not to implement the project in a manner that could affect Malaysia's rights, or cause serious damage to the marine environment by taking into account the report of an independent group of experts and Malaysia was directed to cooperate by giving its comments and studies to Singapore.

When asked on the development concerning the relocation of the water pipe belonging to Singapore's Public Utilities Board (PUB) located within the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (KIK) Complex construction area in Johor Baharu which had yet to receive a reply although the proposal paper on the relocation had been sent a month ago, Syed Hamid said Wisma Putra would hold a discussion with the Singapore government.

"The matter must be resolved wisely at the negotiation table and the issue should not pose any problem and dispute," he said, stressing that Johor and Singapore had cordial bilateral relations.

The project developed by Gerbang Perdana involved the construction of the KIK complex worth RM1.26 billion and road and railway bridges worth RM1.1 billion.

The whole project which would change the image of Johor Baharu city is expected to be completed at the end of 2005. It was officially launched by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad last August.

-- BERNAMA

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