

05 JAN 2003

Syed Hamid-Batu Puteh

MALAYSIA TO SUBMIT NEW DATE FOR SPECIAL ACCORD

KOTA TINGGI, Jan 5 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will submit a new date to Singapore for the signing of the special agreement on the overlapping claims on Pulau Batu Puteh after rejecting Singapore's suggestion for the signing in Brussels, Belgium at the end of the month.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today Singapore's suggestion that the accord be signed in Brussels during the Asean-European Union (EU) Meeting on Jan 27 and 28 was not suitable for the meeting's agenda.

Furthermore, he said it was most likely that he might not be able to attend the meeting.

"As such, we will suggest a date for the signing, I would prefer it (the special agreement) to be signed in Malaysia or they (Singapore) want to sign it in Singapore...it's not a problem to me," he said at a press conference after opening the Haemodialysis Unit building of the Kota Tinggi Hospital, here today.

He said Malaysia might suggest that the signing be held this month or during the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Meeting in Kuala Lumpur next month.

"It's very likely that we can have it in January...otherwise, I think we can do it in February. We will see...if we have it during the NAM Meeting, Singapore is a member of NAM and it can be done in Kuala Lumpur, there's no problem," he said when asked about the date to be proposed by Malaysia.

Syed Hamid said this when asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement in Langkawi yesterday that Malaysia did not agree to Singapore's proposal that the agreement to refer the overlapping claims on Pulau Batu Puteh to the International Court of Justice be signed in Brussels.

The Prime Minister had also questioned Singapore's move in choosing such a distant place for the signing when it could be done here.

Syed Hamid said ideally, the special agreement between Malaysia and Singapore should be signed in this region (Asean) and the matter be disposed off in the near future and as soon as possible.

"I take the cue from Dr Mahathir stating that the accord could be signed in the country and we'll make this proposal. Normally, we (Malaysia) act fast and if the date is unsuitable, we reply quickly and suggest an alternative date," he said.

Unlike the move by Malaysia, he said the island republic preferred to announce the date they proposed to the Singapore media first before informing the Malaysian government about it.

"I (as Foreign Minister) don't announce the date in the newspaper...we have submitted (to Singapore beforehand), so they are not caught by surprise, so we don't want anybody to be blamed. If we can't do it (the signing of the special accord), it's because the date is unsuitable," he said.

According to him, Malaysia had also given an alternative date to Singapore if the proposed date was not suitable.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia had submitted about seven dates for Singapore's consideration since last year but did not get any feedback.

The building for the Haemodialysis Unit was built at a cost of RM348,000 and it now has four haemodialysis machines to treat 17 kidney patients in the Kota Tinggi district.

The Haemodialysis Unit is a new unit at the Kota Tinggi Hospital.  
Construction of the building was completed in July.

-- BERNAMA

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