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Syed Hamid-Island

S'PORE SHOULD RESPECT THE STATUS QUO ON PULAU BATU PUTIH, SAYS SYED  
HAMID

KUALA TERENGGANU, Jan 2 (Bernama) -- Singapore should respect the status quo and refrain from conducting any activities or actions on Pulau Batu Puteh until the overlapping claims to the island are resolved by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today that Malaysia had sent a memorandum to Singapore two days ago objecting to the republic continuing with its actions and activities on the island.

He said that the republic should understand that as long as the overlapping claims by Malaysia and Singapore were not resolved, it should not do anything on the tiny rocky outcrop located 15 nautical miles off Pengerang, Johor, as it did not belong to Singapore.

"To us, Singapore has no sovereignty (over the island) as long as it's not decided whether the island belongs to us or them," he said when asked to comment on the republic building structures and stopping Malaysian boats from approaching the island when the case had yet to be referred to the ICJ.

He said that as such, the government would continue to send the authorities to monitor and patrol the island.

"We will send our authorities to the area because it's ours...when it's decided, we will respect whatever decision by the International Court of Justice," he said.

Asked about Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that several countries were believed to be planning to use Malaysia to launch pre-emptive strikes, Syed Hamid said Malaysia's view was that this was a reality now.

He said Malaysia had a right to voice its opinions on certain matters to protect its interests with Asean to maintain understanding and good relations in the region.

"It's more beneficial for us to continue to cooperate and foster bilateral ties based on understanding than to raise matters which can cause tension and strain bilateral relations," he said.

He said that on the whole, Malaysia had played a positive role in Asean to create a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in the region.

-- BERNAMA

MRA JK