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`Singapore should stop work'

Firdaus Abdullah

PETALING JAYA, Wed. - Singapore should stop its reclamation work along the Straits of Johor pending a decision by an international panel of experts studying the effects of reclamation as ordered by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The Prime Minister said if Singapore stopped its reclamation work, both parties could then forward the case for arbitration.

"If they continue with their work, it would be too late. By the time we have a final decision, the reclamation might have just done permanent damage.

"For us, what we want is for them to stop work now ...that's all, and then we will go for a final decision," he said at a Press conference at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang upon his return from the Asean Summit in Bali.

Dr Mahathir said Kuala Lumpur would study the finer points of the ITLOS decision and decide the next course of action.

"We will get the details and see what we can do."

The government jet carrying Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali touched down at 10.40pm. Among those present to welcome them home were Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Shafie Salleh and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk M. Kayveas.

Asked about the tribute paid by Asean leaders to him in Bali, Dr Mahathir said he was happy that his contributions to Asean were appreciated.