

A sad Abdullah accepts ICJ ruling

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Both sides to now meet over maritime border

TOKYO: Malaysia accepts the decision of the International Court of Justice on Pulau Batu Puteh, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Expressing sadness over the court's verdict in handing over sovereignty of the island to Singapore, the Prime Minister said what was significant was that the decision was made at the international level.

"There will be people who will be emotional, especially in Johor. I can understand this. But, the important thing is we have done this through the available legal channel," he told Malaysian journalists accompanying him on his working visit to Japan.

He said Malaysia was grateful that the ICJ had awarded Middle Rocks to the nation, adding that the next step was for officials from both sides to meet to decide on the maritime demarcation line as soon as possible.

"Any discussion to be held or action to be taken with Singapore must be done in a peaceful manner and with understanding from both sides. We do not want any conflict to arise," he stressed.

The Prime Minister also said that action must also be taken to determine the location of South Ledge.

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DATUK SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI

"We need to determine the demarcation line to show that South Ledge is in our waters," he added.

Abdullah said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim would have an audience with the Johor Sultan to explain in detail the ICJ's decision.

"God willing, I will also have an audience with Tuanku," he said, as he recorded the Government's appreciation to the Malaysian legal team.

In **JOHOR BARU**, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the ICJ's decision meant that

Singapore would not be able to make unilateral decisions, such as conducting reclamation work around Pulau Batu Puteh.

He said as Middle Rocks belonged to Malaysia, Singapore could not do anything unilaterally in the surrounding area.

"We got some of what we wanted, so it was not entirely a disappointment. We accept it," he said, referring to the ICJ's decision to grant Pulau Batu Puteh to Singapore.

On whether he was disappointed with the decision, he replied: "When you go to court, sometimes you win and sometimes you do not. This time, we have partially won. Some will consider this a win-win decision."

Najib said he understood the feelings of the people, especially Johoreans, over the matter but said they had to accept the ICJ's decision.

"On the ground, nothing much changes as Middle Rocks belongs to us and Pulau Batu Puteh has always been managed by Singapore," he said, adding that Middle Rocks was important to Malaysia as it defined the country's maritime border.