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Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	11/12/2018

MALAYSIA-S'PORE MARITIME BORDER

'Vessels will stay put in disputed waters'

NST- 11/12/2018 Pg. 2

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian vessels will stay put in the disputed waters along the Malaysian-Singaporean maritime border, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said they would continue to be there until the negotiation on the maritime border between the two countries was settled.

"We will talk to Singapore, we do not want a confrontation with them... sometimes there are overlapping (claims), but we can settle this through negotiations.

"At the moment, because there are no decisions, Singapore and Malaysian vessels are there," he said after closing the "Anti-Corruption Champions: Sharing Session" with winners of the Sheikh Tamim Hamad Al Thani International Anti-Corruption Excellence Awards here.

Present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Centre director-general Tan Sri

Abu Kassim Mohamed.

Friction arose between the two countries when Singapore claimed that the expansion of the Johor Baru port limits had encroached on its waters in Tuas, whereas Malaysia countered that it was Singapore that extended its maritime boundary off Tuas into Malaysian waters.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke was reported as saying that Malaysia found the Singapore version inaccurate because the changed port limits for Johor Baru did not encroach on Singapore waters.

Dr Mahathir said talks would be expedited by the Foreign Ministry.

On when they would take place, he replied: "Now, as soon as possible."

In **Putrajaya**, Wisma Putra yesterday called the Singaporean high commissioner to discuss the latest development arising from the Declaration of Alteration of Port Limits for Johor Baru Port published on Oct 25 and the Singapore Port Marine Circular No 9 of 2018 dated Dec 6.

In a statement earlier, it said during the discussion it welcomed Singapore's emphasis on the importance of dialogue, and its willingness to engage with Malaysia to resolve matters amicably, along with its consideration of Malaysia's proposed agenda for the bilateral discussion.

"Malaysia is also agreeable to Singapore's counter-proposed dates in January," it read.

Wisma Putra said both countries acknowledged that any measures taken would be without prejudice to their own claims.

"While the government of Malaysia is unable to accede to Singapore's counter-proposal, Malaysia will take measures to deescalate the situation, reaffirming its position to handle the situation in a calm and peaceful manner."

Wisma Putra said Malaysia reiterated the importance of strong relations between the two countries, and hoped that discussions would commence expeditiously.