

## **Johor Menteri Besar was in neutral waters - Dr Mahathir**

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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Osman Sopian was in neutral waters and did not trespass into Singapore territorial waters during his visit to a Malaysian vessel on Jan 9.

Admitting that Osman visited the Malaysian surveillance vessel off Johor Bahru Port without Federal Government permission, the Prime Minister said he was surprised by the reaction on the matter.

“I mean the reaction to his (Osman) going there is quite severe as if he is going to war. He was going to a ship in neutral waters,” he said to a question from the floor after delivering a talk at the Oxford Union that was broadcast live by Astro Awani from London early, today.

However, when the individual who posed the question stressed that Osman had trespassed into Singapore’s territorial waters, Dr Mahathir’s emphasised it was international waters.

“It is not Singapore waters either, it is international waters and the Menteri Besar can go into international waters without Singapore sending warships to chase him away,” he said.

The Malaysian Foreign Ministry yesterday had said it attempted unsuccessfully to stop Osman from making the visit, which Singapore claimed resulted in Osman trespassing into its territorial waters.

Osman has denied that he trespassed into Singapore waters and his visit to the MV Pedoman vessel on Jan 9 was to watch Malaysia’s security teams doing their job.

Singapore insisted that Osman had trespassed into its territorial waters and made a protest

through a diplomatic note to Wisma Putra dated Jan 11, and also sought the postponement of the 14th meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee for Iskandar Malaysia (JMCIM) that was scheduled for Jan 14.

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