

Govt to consult Johor first

Rais: Homework on Pulau Pisang to be done before talks with Singapore

KUALA LUMPUR: The Federal Government will consult the Johor government before engaging with Singapore on taking over the management and administration of the Pulau Pisang lighthouse.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said that with the consent of Johor, the Federal Government would work with Singapore for the best solution.

"The Federal Government will have to do its homework with Johor first. We have not consulted Johor officially yet," he told reporters after delivering his welcoming remarks at

the third International Conference of the Muslim World and the West; Bridging the Gap here yesterday.

He was asked to comment on calls by various quarters for the Federal Government to take over the management and administration of the lighthouse from Singapore, which is operating the lighthouse on the 154ha island, for fear of losing the island.

This was despite a statement by Johor Mentri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman that ownership of the island was based on a treaty between Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Abu

Bakar and the British in 1900, which clearly stated that Malaysia had sovereignty over the island.

Dr Rais also said there were at least 110 islands within Malaysian territory near Sabah, Sarawak, Johor and Kedah that required mapping and determination of status.

He said he had instructed the relevant authorities to prepare a report to be forwarded to the Cabinet.

Asked what Malaysia could do to indicate that islands which were not occupied belonged to it, Dr Rais

said: "There are many things we can do. We can determine the mapping and rights including proposals for Malaysia to be more sensitive towards the ownership of the islands."

On May 23, the International Court of Justice ruled that Singapore had sovereignty over the disputed Pedra Branca, or Batu Puteh, off Johor, and that Malaysia owned the nearby Middle Rocks.

In Tangkak, Abdul Ghani said he believed Malaysia had the capability to manage the lighthouse on Pulau Pisang.

He added that the state government was open to discussing the Federal Government's proposal to take over the management of the lighthouse.

He said the question over the sovereignty of Pulau Pisang did not arise at all, as Johor had clear proof of ownership, including documents dating back to 1900.

He said that under the agreement, lighthouse workers were granted permission to land on the island and use the path leading to the lighthouse, located at the highest point on the island.