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# Malaysia and Singapore suspend port limits extension

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Malaysia and Singapore have jointly agreed to suspend their port limits extension which triggered a maritime dispute last year.

The two countries agreed to revert to the port limits that was in effect prior to Oct 25 for Malaysia and Dec 6 for Singapore, as negotiations on maritime boundary limitations commence.

The suspension takes effect immediately.

This decision was made following a bilateral meeting between Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah and his Singaporean counterpart Dr Vivian Balakrishnan at Wisma Putra here.

"These measures are vital to deescalate the situation on the ground, and pave the way for maritime boundary delimitation of the area.

"These measures also demonstrate the commitment of both countries to work together to preserve a strong and positive bilateral relationship on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and to resolve bilateral issues amicably in accordance with international law," said Saifuddin at a joint press conference with Dr Vivian after the meeting.



Both countries have also agreed that during the suspension, no commercial activities will be authorised and no government vessels will be allowed to anchor in the area.

Malaysia and Singapore vessels will operate in the area in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention

on the Law of the Sea (Unclos).

"All these measures will be carried out without prejudice to our respective maritime boundary claims in the area.

"After these measures are implemented, we will commence negotiation for the maritime boundary delimitations in the relevant area within a month," said Dr Vivian.

Negotiations for the maritime boundary delimitation will be spearheaded by a committee that will be chaired by Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob and his Singaporean counterpart Chee Wee Kiong.

On Oct 25, Malaysia extended the Johor Baru port limits over

unclaimed waters to the edge of Singapore's port limits.

Singapore responded by extending its own port limits on Dec 6, causing an overlap.

Meanwhile, the bilateral meeting also discussed the 1962 Water Agreement between Singapore and Malaysia.

"Both sides have differing views on the right to review the price of water under this agreement. Both have agreed that the Attorney General of their countries will continue their discussions to better understand each other's position," said Dr Vivian.

Saifuddin said the discussions between the AGs was to seek "an amicable way forward" on the issue.

"We reaffirm our commitment to resolve bilateral issues in a constructive manner.

"This is to preserve the relationship between both countries and improve bilateral ties on the basis of equality and mutual respect," he said.

Under the 1962 deal, Johor sells raw water to Singapore at the price of 3 sen per thousand gallons, which in turn sells treated water back to Johor at 50 sen per thousand gallons.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had called the deal "morally wrong".

**Working together:** Saifuddin (right) and Dr Vivian shaking hands after a joint press statement in Putrajaya.

THE STAR/NATION/ PG 2