



Press Release 2003/28

**Sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge
(Malaysia/Singapore)**

Fixing of time-limits for the filing of written pleadings

THE HAGUE, 9 September 2003. The President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has fixed time-limits for the filing of the first written pleadings in the case concerning Sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge (Malaysia/Singapore).

By an Order of 1 September 2003, President Shi decided that the Parties would each file a Memorial no later than 25 March 2004 and a Counter-Memorial no later than 25 January 2005.

The President of the Court fixed the time-limits taking into account the provisions of Article 4 of the Special Agreement concluded between the two Parties. The subsequent procedure has been reserved for further decision.

History of the proceedings

On 24 July 2003, Malaysia and Singapore jointly seised the Court of a dispute concerning sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge. They did so by notifying the Court of a Special Agreement which was signed between them on 6 February 2003 at Putrajaya and which entered into force on 9 May 2003.

In the Special Agreement, the Parties request the Court "to determine whether sovereignty over: (a) Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh; (b) Middle Rocks; (c) South Ledge, belongs to Malaysia or the Republic of Singapore". They agree in advance "to accept the Judgment of the Court . . . as final and binding upon them".

Procedure

Contentious proceedings before the Court consist of two phases: written and oral. During the first phase, the number and order of the written pleadings is governed by the provisions of the special agreement, unless the Court, after ascertaining the views of the parties, decides otherwise. Upon the closure of the written phase, public hearings are organized. The Court then delivers its judgment. The written pleadings remain confidential during the written phase of the proceedings. They are made accessible to the public only on or after the opening of the oral proceedings, subject to a decision to that effect by the Court after it has consulted the parties.

The full text of the Order rendered by the President of the Court will shortly be available on the Court's website at the following address: <http://www.icj-cij.org>