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Abdullah: Draft on new water deal received

IN what is seen as a sign of positive development over the issue of water supply between Malaysia and Singapore, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Singapore has submitted the draft on a new water agreement.

Briefing reporters on bilateral talks between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, he said: "I will not go into the details about the draft ... we are now studying the details and it will not be ready for discussion yet ... until after the Apec forum.

"But I can tell you that this is something positive and we are happy that at least we have a draft to work on now," he added.

The water supply agreement between Malaysia and Singapore expires in 2061.

Malaysia has, however, given the assurance that it would continue to supply water to the republic after the expiry date.

Singapore has insisted that a new water agreement be negotiated immediately, but Malaysia said it would not be able to do so. It can only do so when the expiry date draws nearer.

Meanwhile, Goh told reporters after the bilateral meeting that the discussions pertained to his country's long-term water requirement.

"We are not talking about something immediate, but beyond 2061."

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