

23 DEC 1998

Ghani-Water

JOHOR FULLY SUPPORTS FEDERAL GOVT ON WATER SUPPLY ISSUE - MB

JOHOR BAHARU, Dec 23 (Bernama) -- The Johor government fully supports the federal government on negotiations with Singapore about water supply to the republic, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said today.

"We (Johor) are very happy with the negotiations that are going on now and with what have been agreed to so far," he told reporters after opening a housing exhibition here.

Abdul Ghani welcomed the Dec 17 talks between Prime Ministers Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Goh Chok Tong during the Asean summit in Hanoi, especially on the subject of water supply.

"I cannot comment further on the ongoing negotiations...what I can say now is that Johor is very happy with the current developments," he said when asked about a report in the PAS newspaper "Harakah" last week.

The report, picked up by the Singapore media, said there were problems in the negotiations between Malaysia and Singapore because talks on the water issue were held between Dr Mahathir and Goh whereas it was Johor that supplied water to the republic.

As a result, said the report, Johor had lodged a protest and a discussion would be held as soon as possible between Abdul Ghani and Dr Mahathir.

Abdul Ghani said the question of Johor protesting and disagreeing to the Mahathir-Goh talks did not arise because the state had always fully supported any negotiation concerning water supply to Singapore.

Johor currently supplies 214 million litres of raw water a day to Singapore, and buys back 35 million litres of treated water from the Singapore Public Utilities Board plant in Johor.

Water supply to Singapore is in accordance with two pacts signed in 1961 and 1962 and which will expire in 2001 and 2061 respectively.

-- BERNAMA

MKO SK