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Mahathir-Singapore

MALAYSIA HOPES TO LINK WATER TO OTHER ISSUES

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysia, which has turned down Singapore's offer of a US\$4 billion (RM15.2billion) financial assistance, now hopes to link the pact on water to other unsettled issues with the republic, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Malaysia decided not to accept the offer as there was no need for Singapore's financial assistance at the moment.

From the water-for-fund deal, Malaysia now wanted it to be tied to railway, CIQ (Customs, Immigration and Quarantine facilities), Central Provident Fund (CPF) withdrawals and Singapore's Central Limit Order Book (CLOB), an over the counter stock market, he said.

"We want to supply water to Singapore forever but of course there must be quid pro quo. We can't give something and then receive nothing," he told reporters after meeting heads of the Felda land scheme settlements from throughout the country here.

"We want to settle the railway problem, the CIQ problem, CLOB, CPF....a lot of things," he said.

Asked on the time frame to settle the outstanding issues, Dr Mahathir said it should be decided once and for all as soon as possible.

Malaysia's decision not to accept Singapore's loan offer was announced by Dr Mahathir after meeting his Singapore counterpart Goh Chok Tong in Hanoi yesterday. Both leaders were in the Vietnamese capital to attend the Asean Summit which ended on Wednesday.

Dr Mahathir had said the decision did not mean Malaysia would not continue to supply water to the republic beyond 2061. The Singapore loan offer was linked to a new water pact with Malaysia.

During a meeting here last month, Goh pledged to help Malaysia raise funds in the republic to help finance the country's economic recovery while Dr Mahathir gave an assurance to look into the republic's long term water needs.

Malaysia currently supplies raw water to Singapore under two agreements which will expire in 2011 and 2061.

The CIQ dispute started when Singapore shifted its facility to Woodlands on Aug 1 from Tanjong Pagar but Malaysia declined to move its CIQ facility from the Tanjong Pagar station.

-- BERNAMA

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