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LEAD Malaysia-Singapore

MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE AGREE TO HAMMER OUT A PACKAGE DEAL

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HANOI, Dec 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Singapore today agreed to work out a package deal for some of their outstanding issues including the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) facilities at the Tanjung Pagar railway station in the republic.

Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said while the package deal is being finalised, Singapore would probably extend the deadline for Malaysia to submit its written legal arguments to support its claims of a legal right to maintain its CIQ facilities at Tanjung Pagar. The deadline ended on Tuesday.

Goh said he agreed to the idea of a package deal proposed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Apart from the CIQ facilities, Goh said the package would also include Singapore's request for water and the use of Malaysian airspace by its air force jets; Malaysia's request for the Central Provident Fund (CPF) withdrawals by Malaysians from the peninsula; and the move by the Malaysian government not to allow trading of shares in Singapore's Central Limit Order Book (CLOB).

"There must be a win-win formula for both," he told reporters after holding talks with Dr Mahathir, here.

Goh said Singapore was optimistic that the package deal would work out for their mutual benefit.

He said no time frame had been set for the package deal. "Officials from both sides will be working out the details," he said.

Goh said he had asked Malaysia to put in writing what it would like to have.

He said Singapore had already given in writing what it wanted from Malaysia.

On the CIQ, Goh said Singapore's legal position was clear.

"But with the package, we can rediscuss this. We probably will give them (Malaysia) an extension of time until the package is finalised," he said.

Yesterday, Singapore issued a statement that Kuala Lumpur had not met the Dec 15 deadline to submit its written legal arguments to support its claims of a legal right to maintain its CIQ facilities at Tanjung Pagar.

Singapore had on Oct 30 agreed to Malaysia's request to extend the deadline by six weeks.

Singapore moved its CIQ operations from Tanjung Pagar to Woodlands on Aug 1 while Malaysia retained its facilities there.

Malaysia and Singapore had agreed to work towards improving bilateral ties after the two leaders met in Kuala Lumpur recently.

-- BERNAMA

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