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Malaysia-Singapore

CIQ ISSUE DOES NOT AFFECT SINGAPORE'S SOVEREIGNTY, SAYS SYED HAMID

KUALA LUMPUR, March 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia does not question Singapore's sovereignty with respect to the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) Centre at Tanjong Pagar but raises its rights to operate there based on legal aspects, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

"The question of Singapore's sovereignty does not arise. We are not talking about sovereignty. We are talking about Malaysia's presence and the use of facilities available there," he said.

Syed Hamid disclosed this to reporters after receiving a courtesy call by Australian Minister for Veteran Affairs Bruce Scott at his office.

Apart from the legal aspects, Malaysia's rights to operate at Tanjong Pagar were influenced by several other matters including the historical factor, he said commenting on the statement by Singapore's Foreign Minister Prof S. Jeyakumar yesterday regarding the island republic's sovereign right over the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station.

Malaysia had sent a document to Singapore on Feb 10 where Jeyakumar had stated that Singapore's conclusion was that the Malaysian government was not claiming the right in terms of law to operate at the CIQ Centre there.

Singapore wants Malaysia to recognise its sovereignty over Tanjong Pagar before continuing with negotiations. The station and the railway track were built by the British administration in the 1920's.

Malaysia wanted any dispute with Singapore to be resolved in a package as agreed to by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Singapore counterpart, Goh Chok Tong, he said.

Apart from the CIQ Centre, other issues included in the package involved the agreement on water supply, the use of Malaysian air space by Singapore Air Force and the withdrawal of savings by peninsular Malaysian workers from the republic's Central Provident Fund.

He said a suitable time frame needed to be given to both countries to resolve the issues which used to sour diplomatic relations between them.

"We must give a chance to the discussions and negotiations which are on-going," he said.

He said a delegation headed by the Secretary General of the Foreign Affairs Ministry had left for Singapore on March 11 to hold discussions with the Singapore authorities.

Syed Hamid said any negotiation to resolve the issues need not necessarily be reported to the press.

-- BERNAMA

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