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GOH EXPECTS MORE NEGOTIATIONS WITH MALAYSIA

SINGAPORE, June 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong expects negotiations to be protracted on a package of outstanding bilateral issues to be resolved between Malaysia and Singapore, said a television report here tonight.

Goh told Singapore newsmen while on a visit to South Korea, that there would be several more rounds of negotiations before any conclusion could be reached.

In excerpts of the interview carried by Television Corporation of Singapore (TCS), Goh said "progress has been made because we are talking, we are giving them our answers to the various requests they want and they have given their answers to our request."

"But the gap is still very wide," he added.

The report quoted Goh as saying that the two sides had narrowed the gap on the 'points of agreement' (POA) signed between the two countries over the development of railway land owned by Malaysia in the republic, as Singapore had been prepared to give the Malaysians what they requested.

But on a new water agreement, Goh was reported as saying that the gap had widened because Malaysia has offered much less than what he and his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed had agreed on.

The two leaders decided at the end of last year to resolve as a package a series of bilateral issues which included a new water agreement for Singapore after existing supply contract ends in 2011 and 2061.

Singapore wants to double the raw water supply under a new 100 year agreement up to 2161 but Malaysia has indicated it would be willing to supply treated water reportedly at the current volume of 350 million gallons a day.

Foreign officials of the two countries had met three times this year and are expected to meet again in either July or August in Kuala Lumpur.

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