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Singapore-Malaysia

MALAYSIAN AND SINGAPORE OFFICIALS MEET ON PACKAGE DEAL

By: Tham Choy Lin

SINGAPORE, March 12 (Bernama) -- In the first step towards resolving a package of outstanding bilateral issues between Malaysia and Singapore that soured ties last year, senior officials from the two countries met here yesterday.

"The officials exchanged views on the items in the package. They agreed to meet again at a later date to continue the discussions," said a Singapore Foreign Ministry spokesman today.

The meeting was a follow-up to the agreement by Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Singapore counterpart Goh Chok Tong on Dec 17 last year to discuss outstanding bilateral issues as a package.

A Malaysian official said the next meeting would be in Kuala Lumpur and a date was being fixed.

The Malaysian delegation to yesterday's meeting was led by Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad, while the Singapore side was headed by its Foreign Ministry Permanent Secretary Tan Chin Tiong.

The issues in the package are:

* Malaysia's customs, immigration and quarantine facilities at the Tanjong Pagar railway station in Singapore;

* Singapore's request for a new water supply agreement;

* the use of Malaysian airspace by Singapore's air force;

* Malaysia's request for the withdrawal of peninsular Malaysians' pension savings held under Singapore's Central Provident Fund;

* the move by the Malaysian government not to allow trading of Malaysian shares in Singapore's over-the-counter market, Clob International;

Malaysia has already given an undertaking that it will continue to supply water to Singapore after the expiry of two agreements in 2011 and 2061.

Dr Mahathir, after reaching agreement with Goh on the sidelines of the Asean summit in Hanoi, said: "In any case, we want to resolve these problems once and for all. If we resolve one problem and leave the other problems, then the relationship will still be affected."

Earlier today, Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said there should not be pressure from any party in seeking a solution.

"The important thing is that there is a desire to seek settlement. Let it be discussed in a calm manner without being brought into the public domain," he said.

"It is up to the officials. Let the officials discuss whatever is necessary...only then we will know what can be decided. If there is anything (problems), they will report to the ministerial level," said Syed Hamid.

-- BERNAMA

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