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Syed Hamid-Singapore

LEE'S VISIT OPENS THE WAY FOR SETTling BILATERAL ISSUES- FM

PETALING JAYA, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- Malaysia hopes Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's visit beginning this evening will help settle once and for all outstanding bilateral issues in a single package, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamil Albar said today.

He said Malaysia placed higher hopes in this visit than in the previous one in resolving these issues as this was important to enable the focus to shift to other matters to strengthen bilateral ties.

"Previously we faced a deadlock as each steadfastly held to its respective stand on the main issues. However Singapore now wants to discuss the matters which had been raised," he told reporters after attending the Wisma Putera Family Day here.

Apart from a new water supply agreement with Singapore, others issues in the package were the relocation of the Malaysian Customs Centre from the Tanjung Pagar Railway Station, the development of KTM land in Singapore, the use of Malaysian airspace by the Republic of Singapore Air Force and the withdrawal of money by Peninsular Malaysians who had contributed to the Central Provident Fund while working in Singapore.

Lee, who is scheduled to arrive at the KL International Airport in Sepang this evening for a four-day visit, is scheduled to hold talks with the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and other senior Malaysian ministers.

Lee and Dr Mahathir had discussed the issues when the Senior Minister visited Kuala Lumpur in August last year in line with the agreement to resolve outstanding issues in a package reached in talks between Dr Mahathir and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in Vietnam in 1998.

Syed Hamid said, "In the talks between Lee and Dr Mahathir previously, several proposals were made and we have already responded to them."

"But there is still some gap to be filled before we can reach consensus. Hence this will be discussed further during Encik Lee's visit this time," he said.

It was reported that Singapore received Dr Mahathir's response on March 7 and the republic's Foreign Minister S.Jayakumar told his country's Parliament that there were differences in some of the matters that were the subject of discussion between Lee and Dr Mahathir in August.

However based on the earlier discussions, both parties were now keen to reach an agreement, Syed Hamid said.

Syed Hamid said Lee would be accompanied by several of Singapore's younger leaders who would interact with their Malaysian counterparts.

"There must be networking among the younger leaders of both countries who will take over the leadership to enable consensus to be reached on matters which may give rise to problems from time to time," he said.

In line with Malaysia's open attitude, Lee would have the opportunity to meet a wide spectrum of leaders in Malaysia including former Ministers, Members of Parliament and local entrepreneurs.

Syed Hamid expressed the hope that the Senior Minister would take full advantage of this opportunity to know the actual situation in this country.

-- BERNAMA

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