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Shentonway plot in exchange for KTMB's Tanjung Pagar land

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd's land in Tanjung Pagar will be handed over to Singapore in exchange for a piece of land of equal value in the republic's Shentonway area.

Malaysia agreed to this exchange during the bilateral discussions here yesterday between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and visiting Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

"The piece that the republic is giving to Malaysia may not be of the same size, but is the equivalent in value," Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

He said this after receiving the keys to the new Wisma Putra complex, costing RM170 million, from Putrajaya Holdings Sdn Bhd chairman Datuk Prof Zainuddin Muhammad at Bukit Putra.

Malaysia was also in the midst of negotiating with Singapore for compensation for 12 other parcels of land belonging to KTMB.

On the agreement reached by the two countries on the outstanding issues between the two sides, Syed Hamid said the finer points and details were being thrashed out.

"We are now in the midst of putting everything agreed upon in black and white."

The issues that the two nations agreed in principle to resolve are the sale of water to Singapore; the points of agreement for the development of railway land owned by KTMB; the status of the Malaysian Customs, Immigration and quarantine facility at the KTM station in Tanjung Pagar; the use of Malaysian air space by the Singapore air force; and the withdrawals from Singapore's Central Provident Fund by workers from Malaysia.

Syed Hamid declined to say how long it would take to draft the detailed agreement on the issues.

As far as the Cabinet was concerned, it agreed in "broad principle" today to expedite the resolution of the outstanding issues.

All written agreements between the two countries would be signed under one package.

Earlier, Syed Hamid said the new Wisma Putra complex in Bukit Putra was fully equipped with the latest sophisticated equipment and technology.

The 522 staff who cater to 83 Malaysian embassies overseas and 145 foreign embassies in Malaysia are expected to move in by Sept 10.

"There is ample space for more staff to be recruited in the future as we have also taken over the building on the hilltop meant for the Institute for Diplomatic and Foreign Relations," he added.

The present Wisma Putra building in Kuala Lumpur would be handed to IDFR.

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