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Singapore-Malaysia

SINGAPORE TO RESPOND NEXT MONTH TO OUTSTANDING ISSUES WITH MALAYSIA

SINGAPORE, March 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said Singapore should be ready to respond to Malaysia next month on the next step towards resolving the package of outstanding bilateral issues, said a news report.

Goh said more time was needed to study the response from Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, received on March 7, as the matter was complex, the Straits Times reported.

Foreign Minister S.Jayakumar had told Parliament that there were variations on some points between Dr Mahathir and Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew who had discussed the issues with the former during a visit to Kuala Lumpur last August.

Jayakumar said Singapore had to examine the proposed price of continued water supply from Malaysia and the proportion of treated and raw water although the volume supplied remained unchanged.

Goh, who was speaking to Singapore reporters in Prague yesterday to wrap up a 10-day visit to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, was also asked if he was optimistic about a settlement.

"So long as there is a chance that something can be done, we should remain optimistic," he said.

Malaysia currently supplies the bulk of Singapore's water needs through two agreements that will expire in 2011 and 2061.

Apart from a new water agreement for Singapore, the other issues in the package are the relocation of a Malaysian customs checkpoint in the Malaysian-owned Tanjung Pagar railway station here, development of railway land belonging to Malaysia in Singapore, pension savings of West Malaysians held in Singapore and the use of Malaysian airspace by the Singapore air force.

The two countries are now examining Malaysia's proposal to shift the Tanjung Pagar railway station to Kranji, north of the island-state, and to link it to Malaysia's southern Johor state via an underground rail tunnel.

Singapore has agreed in principle to the proposal.

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