

We'll wait for Singapore's reply on proposals, says Syed Hamid

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. Malaysia will respect Singapore's request for more time to study its latest proposal on negotiating outstanding bilateral issues including supply of water.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Malaysia was awaiting a reply on the proposal sent last month.

It was contained in a letter submitted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

The unresolved issues include, among others, water supply and customs, immigration and quarantine facilities in Singapore, the

re-development of Malayan Railway land and use of Malaysian airspace by the republic's air force.

The details were worked out between Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and Dr Mahathir in 1998 but not finalised due to the disagreement over the price of water. The water supply agreement had been scheduled to be renewed last year.

He was speaking to reporters after meeting Dr Tatsuo Arima, a special envoy of Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi at his office here today.

Asked to comment further, Syed Hamid said: "It would not be right for me to discuss the matter in the

media before any agreement is reached on it.

On his meeting with Arima, Syed Hamid said his visit was a follow-up to Koizumi's recent visit.

He said Arima had clarified Japan's new stand on its Official Development Assistance.

Japan wanted the funds to be properly co-ordinated and more effective in view of the present economic situation in the country, Syed Hamid said. Japan cut ODA by 10 per cent in its 2002 budget.

Syed Hamid said Japan considered Malaysia as strategic in the dispensing of its ODA in the region as it had always made efficient use of the funds.