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S'pore-Rais  
S'PORE HITS OUT AT RAIS' NEW ACT PROPOSAL

By: Salbiah Said

SINGAPORE, Oct 25 (Bernama) -- Singapore today questioned a Malaysian minister's proposal for new legislation to resolve the water dispute with the republic, saying it goes against Kuala Lumpur's long time position on the matter.

A Foreign Ministry statement said the minister's remarks were not in accord with the repeated assurances from the Malaysian government that the 1961 and 1962 water agreements between the two countries would be honoured.

But the statement did not refer to all the points made by Malaysia's Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim in his remarks yesterday.

Dr Rais had said, among other things, that if Singapore continued to be "unreasonable", Malaysia might introduce the new legislation and use it to overrule the two water agreements. The new act could state that the supply of water to any offshore party would be subject to Malaysia's domestic needs, he said.

The Singapore statement referred to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's remarks as reported in the New Straits Times on May 3 and Aug 7.

Dr Mahathir is reported to have said that Malaysia was bound by the water agreements.

"...According to the agreements we (Malaysia) must supply them (Singapore) with water. We will continue, we promised them that we will supply them with water..," Dr Mahathir was quoted as saying.

The Singapore statement also quoted Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar as saying at a bilateral meeting on July 1 that "Malaysia has repeatedly said that it will honour the 1961 and 1962 agreements until their expiry in 2011 and 2061 respectively".

"During the Separation of Singapore, Malaysia did not propose for the agreements to be reviewed. It continues to honour the agreements and such commitment is further reinforced when Malaysia signed the Separation Agreement in 1965," Syed Hamid was quoted as saying.

The statement said that the two water agreements were legally binding and their observance are guaranteed by both the two governments in the Separation Agreement.

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