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Mahathir-Singapore

S'PORE'S ACTIONS JEOPARDIZE BILATERAL TIES WITH M'SIA, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Singapore's actions in dealing with bilateral issues with Malaysia have all along never helped in preserving relations between the republic and Kuala Lumpur.

"We're saddened over how Singapore always act in a way that could jeopardize the close ties between Malaysia and Singapore," he told reporters after recording his New Year's message to be aired by RTM, here.

Dr Mahathir said that at the time of Singapore's cessation from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore gave an undertaking that Malaysia's facilities in Singapore would continue to remain in the republic in accordance with the agreement previously entered into with the British but they failed to abide by it.

"For instance, they deliberately increased the rate for the lease (of land) for the naval base in Woodlands that we were forced to vacate and we vacated without being paid even a sen. And we didn't make a fuss over the matter," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the water supply issue also caused problems in bilateral relations.

The Prime Minister said that Singapore had always been asking for the volume of water supplied to the republic to be increased and Malaysia had promised to meet their request by taking into account the increasing population in the neighbouring country.

"But they objected to a review of the payment even though it has been agreed that after 25 years, we could negotiate the price of water. After 25 years, not on reaching 25 years," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Singapore however contended that it was now too late to negotiate the matter.

"And there are many other actions by Singapore which do not help in preserving ties with Malaysia, including differentiating between Malaysians in the peninsula and those from Sabah and Sarawak over the Central Provident Fund pensions issue," he said.

In recent days, the two neighbours are embroiled in a dispute over the rightful ownership of Pulau Batu Puteh, a rocky outcrop located 7.7 nautical miles off Johor.

According to news reports yesterday, Singapore is prepared to ratify the special agreement with Malaysia to pave the way for the dispute to be brought before the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on the stance of the United States which appeared to be reluctant to learn from the events of Sept 11 and declined to identify the root causes of terrorism.

"We're very sad because now that the various parties have expressed the importance of the causes of terrorism to be tackled and eliminated, it appears that the approach adopted is still in building up the military, defence," he said.

The United States, he said, also acted in attacking a country which so far had not been known to be involved in the Sept 11 attacks on New York and Washington, which claimed 3,000 lives.

"All this will only increase anger that will lead to more acts of terrorism," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MAM SHO AHH RM

