

13 MAR 2002

Mahathir-Package

MALAYSIA PREPARES NEW AGREEMENT PACKAGE WITH S'PORE

SUBANG, March 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is working on a new settlement package for discussion with Singapore to resolve various issues involving bilateral relations between the two countries, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The prime minister said the government already had the ideas and the new formula for the package.

"Singapore does not want us to negotiate through the press, so we respect it," he said when met at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) station here before leaving for an official visit to Russia, Germany and Poland.

Asked whether the new package included land issues, Dr Mahathir said: "all the issues are in one package, we'll add the new things that come up."

However, he did not specify whether the issue of Singapore's land reclamation in Pulau Tekong, which had drawn protests from various parties in Malaysia, was included in the package.

Asked about the new price that Malaysia is asking for the water that it supplies to Singapore, Dr Mahathir said: "That we'll inform Singapore".

He said the price of three sen for every 1,000 gallons of raw water that Malaysia supplies Singapore now was unreasonable, (1 gallon=4.5 litres).

Malaysia now supplies 350 million gallons of raw water a day at three sen per 1,000 gallons to Singapore which sells back 37 million gallons of treated water to Johor at 50 sen per 1,000 gallons.

Asked whether the Pulau Tekong land reclamation issue could be resolved, Dr Mahathir said it could if there was goodwill from both sides.

He said Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who met him on Monday, had given an assurance that the republic would consider Malaysia's objections on the matter.

Lee is on a four-day visit to Malaysia beginning Monday.

"At first they rejected (our) claims that there are problems but now they concede that they will consider it when we submit our objections," he said.

The issue surfaced last week when Malaysia expressed concerns that the reclamation activities by Singapore might narrow the water passage separating the two country and affect the ecologicals system and the livelihood of fishermen in the area.

-- BERNAMA

AZH ZS JK