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Singapore-Malaysia

MALAYSIA ASKED TO SET OUT ITS POSITION ON OUTSTANDING ISSUES

By: Tham Choy Lin

SINGAPORE, Jan 27 (Bernama) -- Singapore has asked Malaysia to set out its position on outstanding bilateral issues including water supply and Malaysian-owned railway land in the island-state in the latest development in their negotiations.

A Singapore Foreign Ministry spokesman said today Singapore had written several times to Malaysia, the last being Dec 10 last year, on the package of outstanding issues and was still awaiting a reply.

The spokesman said Singapore had sought clarification on the location of the rail station here and additional railway land which Malaysia wanted to include in the package if the rail service, which currently ends in Singapore, stopped in Johor.

On the issue of water supplied by Malaysia, the spokesman said both sides have stated the price they expected.

"Singapore had requested Malaysia to set out its position on these and other issues so that there would be a clear framework for both sides, led by the two foreign ministers, to meet on the details," the spokesman added.

Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said last week talks on the package had stalled, but yet to hit a deadlock, because both sides had yet to reach a new price for the water which Malaysia had been supplying since the 60s.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was asking for a very reasonable price. Singapore has offered to pay 45 sen per 1,000 gallon which it currently obtains at three sen only under two agreements expiring in 2011 and 2061.

Singapore now imports 350 million gallons of raw water daily from Malaysia's Johor state which in turn buys back 37 million gallons of treated water daily at 50 sen per 1,000 gallon.

The Singapore foreign ministry spokesman said reports that the current water agreements were inequitable because the British, which colonised the two countries, was "without basis."

The spokesman said the two agreements were signed in 1961 and 1962 when Malaysia, then Malaya, was already independent while Singapore had achieved self-government.

The agreements were inked between the Johor state government and Singapore's City Council and the former chose not to review the price of the water sold when the terms were reviewed after 25 years, in 1986 and 1987 respectively, said the spokesman.

The spokesman also said views that Singapore was profiteering from the resale of water to Johor was "a misrepresentation of facts."

Singapore spent RM2.40 to treat every 1,000 gallon of water and sold at 50 sen back to Johor which charged consumers RM3.95 for the same amount, said the spokesman.

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