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Syed Hamid-Water

M'SIA HOPES S'PORE WILL BE OPEN TO RESOLVING WATER ISSUE - SYED HAMID

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysia today expressed the hope Singapore will adopt an open mind to reaching a consensus on the water supply issue at the bilateral talks next month.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Malaysia did not want to be continuously hampered and "haunted" by the water issue.

"If Singapore adopts an open mind and wants to achieve a consensus, we can look forward to our future bilateral relations and not turn back," he told reporters on the sidelines of the 56th Umno General Assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), here.

Syed Hamid, who will head the Malaysian delegation for the talks, was confident that an agreement would be reached on the water price formula at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the two countries on July 1 and 2.

Kuala Lumpur is expected to propose a formula to avert a dispute in future on water pricing apart from focusing attention on other issues lumped under a package agreed upon by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

"I think if we can clinch a deal about water, all other things will follow...there is no problem...water is the core and fundamental issue," he said.

Syed Hamid said he would inform his Singaporean counterpart during the meeting why and how Malaysia arrived at the formula.

"We see how we can work out something agreeable for both sides...both sides can work out some details," he said.

He said the republic could be assured that whatever price offered by Malaysia would reflect the market.

"We have worked on an alternative cost on what should be the type of water supplied to another country, how much it would cost...We now want to review the price which should have been done in 1986/87," he said.

Singapore currently buys raw water from Johor at 3 sen per 1,000 gallons (4,500 litres).

The republic had suggested the price be raised to 45 sen per 1,000 gallons but was disagreed by Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister.

-- BERNAMA

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