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Mahathir-Singapore

M'SIA WANTS QUICK SETTLEMENT TO OUTSTANDING ISSUES, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia does not want to delay the settlement of a water supply issue with Singapore as the longer the negotiations take, the more money Malaysia will lose.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia wanted a meeting be held between its officials and their Singapore counterparts to discuss outstanding bilateral issues particularly that relating to water supply.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Finance Ministry's Quality and Clients Day here today, Dr Mahathir, who is also the Finance Minister, said that Malaysia had proposed to sell raw water to Singapore at a reasonable price as presently it was being underpaid.

He was asked to comment on today's news report quoting a Singapore Foreign Ministry spokesman that the island-state has asked Malaysia to set its position on outstanding bilateral issues, including water supply and Malaysia-owned railway land in the republic.

Singapore had written several times to Malaysia, the last being on Dec 10 last year, on the package of outstanding issues and was still awaiting a reply, the report quoted the spokesman as saying.

"What we know is that we have been charging them (Singapore) 3 sen per thousand gallons of raw water and we know also that countries like Hong Kong buy their raw water from mainland China at RM8 per thousand gallon. Obviously we are being underpaid," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said the longer the negotiation took, the more money Malaysia was going to lose.

"When Singapore delays the negotiation, refuses to accept our request, which is not RM8 but a reasonable figure, that means that we are losing money every day," he said.

The prime minister said he did not believe that outstanding problems, including the water issue, would sour Malaysia's relations with Singapore.

"Our relations can be okay but this thing must be settled," Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

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