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Syed Hamid-Singapore

M'SIA'S REQUEST SHOULDN'T BE MISINTERPRETED AS GIVING UP, SAYS SYED HAMID

PETALING JAYA, May 5 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's stand that the outstanding issues with Singapore be resolved immediately and its call to the republic to compromise should not be misinterpreted as a sign of giving up, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

He said Malaysia also had no intention of adding new issues to the package.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had in his letter to Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew explained Malaysia's stand in what issues needed to be resolved, he told reporters after opening the annual meeting of the Malaysian Association of Youth Clubs (MAYC) in Selangor here.

He said Malaysia had already received feedback from the republic's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and was studying the contents before commencing discussions at the ministerial and official levels.

Syed Hamid said he had also been in contact with his Singapore counterpart and hoped to submit some feedback to them by the end of May.

"We will be having discussions at the ministerial and official levels on the issues and we will seek the views of both prime ministers where necessary," he said.

He noted that Singapore seemed interested to resolve the issues, and believed that all the issues would be resolved, given the right spirit.

Syed Hamid stressed that the issues between the two countries should not be left unresolved and should be settled immediately for continuous bilateral relations.

"We should resolve these issues immediately so as not to be haunted by the problems or hampered by outstanding issues that will dampen bilateral ties," he said.

The minister said the spirit of cooperation, neighbourliness and willingness to settle issues were critical as both countries played a key role in the context of Asean where economic progress and stability of both countries contributed to regional harmony.

Among the outstanding bilateral are water and customs, immigration and quarantine facilities in Singapore as well as re-development of land belonging to Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd and the use of air space by the Singapore Air Force.

Syed Hamid expressed confidence that both countries could resolve their differences and reach a consensus.

However, he said the issue of land reclamation work carried out by the republic required a different approach.

"We have spoken on the policy and the effects (from the activities) on Malaysia but at the same time we will still be looking into the technical study so that we could come up with our own confirmation. But we hope that by the time we come up with our study, it would not be too late," he said.

He said the republic should consider Malaysia's views and concerns on the reclamation issue although Malaysia agreed that it was Singapore's rights to proceed with such activities.

He said the activities conducted in the Johor Straits would jeopardise the shipping passageways to the Pasir Gudang and Tanjung Pelepas Ports and would also have an impact on the environment.

Syed Hamid said that in principle Malaysia had submitted a report on the reclamation work and had called for a halt to the reclamation

activities.

However, this was ignored by the republic which later maintained the Malaysian government should submit a detailed technical report on the matter, he said.

"We only asked that Singapore temporarily halt the reclamation works while we prepare a detailed technical assessment on the matter, as requested by them...however they have declined our suggestion," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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