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Syed Hamid-Singapore

SYED HAMID: M'SIA READY TO DISCUSS ON STAND-ALONE BASIS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is prepared to discuss water and other issues in the package of bilateral issues with Singapore separately as insisted by the island republic, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

"We have no problem. Now they have agreed to discuss on a stand-alone basis. We will discuss it separately. It's okay," he told reporters when met at Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base in Subang here before departing for India.

He is part of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's entourage visiting India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia from today until Oct 20.

Syed Hamid was commenting on news reports yesterday that Singapore had agreed to discuss the water and other issues in the package of bilateral issues with Malaysia separately.

He said the move by Singapore to initiate a proposal to discuss the bilateral issues separately was not a surprise as a package approach was problematic.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia was receptive to the proposal because its ultimate aim was to resolve the outstanding bilateral issues.

To Malaysia, the most important issue was water which was already due, he said.

Malaysia and Singapore are now negotiating the new water price but Singapore is disputing Malaysia's move to revise the water pricing as Malaysia had not done so when the revision was due some time back.

Senior officials from the two countries are meeting in Johor Baharu for two days starting today to resolve the water issue.

Malaysia and Singapore signed two water agreements in 1961 and 1962. Under the 1961 agreement, Singapore can draw 88 million gallons daily (MGD) from the Pulai catchment area and Tebrau and Skudai rivers in Johor up to Aug 31, 2011.

The 1962 agreement allows Singapore to draw another 50 MGD from Sungai Johor until Sept 28, 2061. The two agreements provide for a revision of the water pricing after 25 years, which was due in 1986 and 1987 respectively.

Malaysia now sells Singapore its raw water at three sen per 1,000 gallons and buys back treated water from the republic at 50 sen per 1,000 gallons.

-- BERNAMA

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