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Mahathir-Singapore

OUTSTANDING ISSUES BETWEEN M'SIA AND S'PORE CAN BE SETTLED, SAYS PM

SHAH ALAM, May 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the outstanding issues between Malaysia and Singapore can be settled if the Singapore government is prepared to compromise and accept Malaysia's views.

He said that Singapore should accept Malaysia's views if they were based on fact, affecting the rights of the country.

"We can settle them but there must be a compromise. If they are to be settled only by agreeing to conditions set by others, then it's difficult to reach a settlement. In matters affecting our right, and with the fact proven, then they must be accepted," he told reporters after the Workers Day 2002 rally here.

He was asked to comment on the statement by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong yesterday that the Singapore government wish to overcome outstanding bilateral issues with Malaysia soon.

Goh was reportedly quoted as saying that this was vital to enable both countries to cooperate in tackling issues facing the region.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia was making initiatives for consultations to overcome the issues.

Asked whether there would be a meeting between the two countries' prime ministers, Dr Mahathir said that it would initially involve officials representing both parties.

"First, we want the officials to meet, then the ministers or prime ministers," he said.

The prime minister said that the consultation would be held as soon as both parties could arrange a suitable date.

Asked to comment on the statement by Singapore Foreign Minister S.Jayakumar who was reported to have said that Malaysia's protest note over the land reclamation issue was not complete, Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia had not received any official reply on the matter.

"We only knew that he has said that they were baseless. We don't know how they could reject our findings," he said.

He however said that Malaysia would provide further details on the environmental impact study conducted by the country as requested by Singapore.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia was also interested in the environmental impact study conducted by the republic.

"We would also like to have a look at their environmental impact study...we would like to know. Let's not have that of only one party...let's have that of both parties," he said.

S.Jayakumar was reported to have said that the protest note submitted by Malaysia lacked details on the effect of the reclamation works on Malaysia.

Besides the issue on the land reclamation in the narrow Johor Straits separating both countries, Malaysia's water supply to the republic, the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine Complex in Singapore, the redevelopment of Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad land in Singapore, the use of Malaysian airspace by the Singapore Air Force and the withdrawal of Central Provident Fund by workers from Peninsular Malaysia are issues affecting both countries.

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