

19 JUL 2003

Syed Hamid-Water

DOOR FOR TALKS ON WATER ISSUE STILL OPEN, SAYS SYED HAMID

YAN, July 19 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has never closed the door on talks over the water issue with Singapore despite the republic hurling various accusations against the country, said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

He said the talks could still proceed but Singapore must be honest and sincere in seeking a solution for the issue, instead of making various allegations.

"We have never shut the door for negotiations, only we have stopped the talks after observing that the republic is not sincere in seeking a solution and gave the impression that this country is taking the advantage in this issue."

He told reporters this after opening the briefing on the Micro Credit Scheme held by Yan Umno Division here today.

On Singapore's reaction to the series of advertisements placed in the local dailies by the National Economic Action Council in regard to the water issue, Syed Hamid said people in the republic now had the true picture of the situation.

Syed Hamid said all this while, Singaporeans only heard one-sided arguments from their government and now they were given the true facts and figures by Malaysia.

"Even in Singapore, they can read the advertisements placed in the country's dailies. As for people in the country, the government found that they are positive and understood what was done by the government to deal with the issue," he said.

He said the series of advertisements and the soon to be published booklet on the water issue were to provide accurate facts and figures and were not based on emotions and rhetorics.

Syed Hamid said the advertisements were timely as Malaysia was no longer interested in "debating" the issue where the facts had been twisted and made confused by Singapore, preferring the people to arrive at their own conclusion and judgement.

"This issue needs to be explained to the people, that is why we come out with the advertisements, show the facts and it is up to the people to make their own judgement based on the facts which we provided," he said.

On Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's meeting with his Thai counterpart Thaksin Shinawatra in Langkawi on July 27-28, Syed Hamid said various bilateral issues would be discussed between the two leaders.

The discussion would cover bilateral cooperation in agriculture, fisheries, tourism, border and trade issues, said Syed Hamid.

"This is the annual meeting between the prime ministers of both countries to forge closer relations. Last year it was held in Thailand and this year it is Malaysia's turn.

"Similar meetings are held with leaders of Asean nations like Brunei and Indonesia," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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