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Malaysia-Brunei

MALAYSIA AND BRUNEI CLOSER TO REACH SOLUTION ON MARITIME AND LAND ISSUE

PUTRAJAYA, Aug 22 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam have moved closer towards finding a solution to the land and maritime boundaries issue, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

Briefing reporters on the meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah at the Prime Minister's office here, Syed Hamid said that while both parties had agreed on certain points there were also areas on which they were yet to agree.

He said that at present Kuala Lumpur saw no necessity to have more official meetings on the issue as one meeting was held two days ago and three were held between Malaysia and Brunei after Dr Mahathir's meeting with Sultan Hassanal in Penang last May.

"I think we have moved nearer to finding a solution...we have looked at areas both parties are interested in. And today the Prime Minister at the meeting with the Sultan explained the position. So now, I think it is up to Brunei to look at what we have stated...so we will wait for their response...if they want further discussions or other proposals..," he said.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia always believed in dialogue to achieve agreement in the interests of both countries and to ensure that both sides were satisfied with the final outcome.

"Of course, in any agreement we would like to achieve a win-win situation where both parties can benefit economically. So we have to make sure both parties are fully satisfied with whatever outcome," Syed Hamid said.

The Foreign Minister was also asked what type of consensus was reached on the matter during today's meeting that lasted more than one-and-a-half hours.

"I think the Prime Minister had made it very clear that we have submitted our proposal and that the proposal is the maximum that we can live with. And so we have to wait. For the time being we have given our response to their proposal. So we do not want the whole thing to be debated until it becomes very difficult for both parties to negotiate," he said.

Syed Hamid was also asked whether there would be a time frame to solve the issue.

"Our original intention was to resolve (it) yesterday. In the spirit of economic cooperation and in the context of Asean...of course, we consider the sooner the better it would be. But we know it is a matter of great importance. Talking about land and maritime boundaries matters, both countries have to look at it quite seriously," he said.

Syed Hamid said although the problem had dragged on for many years, both sides were keen to achieve a lasting and durable solution.

"I think we have waited for a long time. So it is nothing wrong in waiting further until we come out with something Brunei feels comfortable with and Malaysia also feels that it is in Malaysia's interest," he said.

Replying to a question, Syed Hamid said Malaysia did not consider the issue as a conflict.

"We have not gone to a stage looking at it as a matter of conflict (that) we need to resolve. The thing that Malaysia wants to look at, for example, is the land. It is something that Malaysia never considered a matter in dispute," he said.

"But I think at least there are papers on both sides that we are very clearly working on but have not come to any final agreement," he said.

Syed Hamid also said that the discussions went on in a friendly atmosphere, reflecting the close relations between the two countries.

"I can tell you they discussed in a very friendly atmosphere trying to find solution. Both have got sincerity in trying to find a solution acceptable to both sides. I think the discussions went on very well...it shows the closeness between Malaysia and Brunei.

"I think this is what we want to sustain and maintain although we got differences on how we look at the maritime and land areas," Syed Hamid said

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