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Syed Hamid-Water

NO NEW LAW ENACTED TO DENY WATER SUPPLY TO S'PORE, SAYS SYED HAMID

PUTRAJAYA, Feb 6 (Bernama) -- Setting the record straight, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said that Malaysia has not enacted any new law to deny the supply of water to the island republic.

He said the fact was that Malaysia has been supplying water to Singapore since 1927 and will continue to do so in future.

Speaking at a joint media conference with his Singaporean counterpart, S. Jayakumar, after the signing of the special agreement to bring the Pulau Batu Puteh dispute to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Syed Hamid said the question of Malaysia not honouring its obligation, as hinted by Jayakumar earlier, was misleading.

"We are not happy with the current price of 3 sen (per 1,000 gallon of raw water) which we consider unreasonable and not reflective of the current situation," Syed Hamid said.

Jayakumar earlier said that no unilateral action should be taken to render the Malaysia-Singapore water agreement null and void, including by enacting domestic law on the part of Malaysia.

In October last year, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim reportedly said that if Singapore continues to be "unreasonable", Malaysia may introduce new legislation and use it to overrule the two water agreements signed by the two countries in 1961 and 1962.

Singapore has insisted that after a lapse of 25 years, Malaysia has no legal basis for asking for a price review after failing to do so in 1986 and 1987.

Queried on the publication of confidential documents pertaining to the water negotiations between both sides, Jayakumar claimed that Singapore did it to "set the record straight" after being at the receiving end of accusations pertaining to its position on the water talks with Malaysia.

Syed Hamid said that Malaysia's position on the matter was that in a negotiation, anything related to that should be kept confidential and private.

"In a negotiation also, we believe that positions will keep on changing whereby the publication of some letters, it misleads a lot of things or discussions that we have between us," he said.

He said that both sides could not conduct their relations through the media as quoting some media or letters which were not updated on the latest situation made it difficult to arrive at any solution.

Nevertheless, Syed Hamid said that both sides should not engage in fault-finding but rather strive to build bridges between them with greater understanding, mindful of the sensitivities involved.

On whether the text of the special agreement would be made public, Jayakumar said that he did not see any problem in doing so, a view shared by Syed Hamid who said that if there was a necessity to publish the document, Malaysia had no problem with that.

Jayakumar also responded on remarks by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Singapore was making Malaysia a scapegoat in an attempt to divert the attention of Singaporeans from serious internal problems, including economic woes.

To this, the Singaporean diplomat said his government does not duck issues as it is upfront with the people regarding problems the country may face, including in economy or security.

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