

30 JUN 2003

Syed Hamid-Water

M'SIA-S'PORE TIES CAN DO WITHOUT FICTIONAL ELEMENTS, SAYS SYED HAMID

PUTRAJAYA, June 30 (Bernama) -- Long-term relations between Malaysia and Singapore must be based on facts and truths without the injection of "fiction" that can mar ties across the Causeway, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

Referring to a booklet published by Singapore purportedly to give its side of the story over the island's water pricing feud with Malaysia, he said that he was pondering the motive behind the publication.

"I just want to ask the question...what gain is there (for them), do they want to mislead the Malaysian public or do they want to justify their unreasonable action to their public because their public are paying much more for the water.

"And yet they are paying us 3 sen (per 1,000 gallons of raw water). It's ridiculous," he told reporters after attending his ministry's excellence award presentation here.

Newspapers today carry reports on the "Rundingan Air-Hakikat Yang Sebenarnya" booklet which, among others, accused Malaysia of being unreasonable, leading to the water negotiation being stalled, and that it always changed its stand especially in fixing the price of raw water.

Syed Hamid described the latest move by Singapore as "underhanded", what with the previous publication of confidential letters relating to the water talks by the republic.

The minister said that he was aware of the existence of the booklet some time ago but chose to keep quiet for the sake of having good bilateral relations with Malaysia's southern neighbour.

"I hope Singapore understands this. It is not going to be in its advantage to create stories and I think that in this particular case, it is actually a very good fiction that they have done.

"Let's not create fiction that can mar the relationship or create confusion," he said.

He said that Singapore's unfair actions and unreasonable attitude in bilateral ties with Malaysia had to be exposed.

He said that Wisma Putra would come up with its own publication on the matter to dispel all the "misrepresentations, the half-truths, the misleading statements."

Syed Hamid said that the booklet would be straightforward in presenting the facts as they were and that "we are not going to use their language."

He said it was important that the Singapore public knew what was actually the true position in respect of the water negotiation.

"And our Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) has gone to the extent of saying that we have no problem in supplying water to Singapore. But it must be at a price that is reasonable, reflecting the commercial aspect of it," he said.

Added Syed Hamid: "Why don't they have the courage to say that, yes, the price of water is unreasonable, we're willing to look at it, let us sit down and discuss."

-- BERNAMA

MAM RM