

Water may come under Federal control

EST 11 MAR 1991

By K.P. Waran

PORT KLANG, Sun. — The Government is studying the possibility of placing water supply under Federal jurisdiction to overcome shortage in some States, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said it was necessary to prepare for future developments, including formulating contingency plans for a worsening water situation.

"Some States have indicated that they are not keen

to allow the Federal Government to take over the supply of water.

"It is important to realise that water is not merely a profitable commodity but it is a basic necessity which has to be supplied to everyone," he said in response to questions by newsmen after visiting a boat show at the Royal Selangor Yacht Club here.

He said some States with a smaller population had vast water reserves while other States with a larger

population had limited water reserves.

Dr Mahathir said since water came under the jurisdiction of State Governments, the Federal Government found it difficult to supply water to States with bigger population but insufficient water reserves.

He said the Government realised that water supply was an important factor for national development, adding that the Government's priority included ensuring water and electricity supply for all.

Dr Mahathir said he had received and read the report from the Malacca State Government on the latter's investigation into the sudden loss of water from the Durian Tunggal dam.

The report will be tabled for discussion and decision at the next Cabinet meeting scheduled for Wednesday.

Malacca Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik had said on Thursday that the report "had uncovered some surprising and unexpected causes".

Dr Mahathir said the Government had given priority to infrastructural development in each State including providing sufficient water but this depended on whether there were sufficient reserves.

During his visit to the club, the Prime Minister was briefed on the boats and equipment on display at the show.

Dr Mahathir also started an Optimist race for youngsters aged between seven and 14 years.