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Mahathir-Water

M'SIA WON'T SUFFER LOSS IF SINGAPORE BUYS INDONESIAN WATER

JOHOR BAHRU, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia will not suffer any loss if Singapore obtained raw water supply from Indonesia.

In fact, said the Prime Minister, Malaysia had no authority to prevent Singapore from doing so as that was the island republic's right.

Dr Mahathir, who was speaking to reporters after attending a dinner with Johor Umno liaison committee members, said in jest: "We won't suffer any loss. We can in fact drink that water, bathe more frequently..and the Johor people will be more sweet-smelling."

He was asked to comment on reports that Singapore was holding talks with Indonesia to buy 3.8 billion litres of raw water per day.

This announcement is believed to have been made in the wake of strains in Malaysia-Singapore ties due to the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) checkpoint issue. Singapore currently depends on Malaysia for its water supply.

Singapore's CIQ checkpoint moved from the Tanjong Pagar railway station to Woodlands on Saturday, but Malaysia has declined to shift its checkpoint from the station which is located on land belonging to KTM Bhd.

Singapore currently gets raw water supply totalling one billion litres a day from Johor under two agreements expiring in the years 2011 and 2061.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, was also asked to comment on the call by Umno Youth for Malaysia to suspend new bilateral deals with Singapore.

He said the call would be studied but there were not any new deals between the two countries at present.

"In any case, the dispute between Malaysia and Singapore was started by the republic," he said.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said Singapore had the right to report to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) about the move by Malaysia to encourage Malaysian traders to switch to domestic ports

"If they want to report, let them report..we too can report."

Dr Mahathir also said that the government would continue to hold meet-the-people sessions to explain the current economic downturn although much had been said about it.

"This is important to raise people's awareness as the subject is difficult to understand, currency trading for instance," he said.

During today's visit to Johor, Dr Mahathir met Umno and Barisan Nasional leaders as well as community leaders from all parts of the state.

He also attended a briefing on the construction of the Sungai Johor bridge and the development of Desaru.

He would hold a closed-door meeting with Johor Umno liaison committee members before returning to Kuala Lumpur.

-- BERNAMA

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