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Mahathir-water

INTER-STATE WATER TRANSFER TO BE EXPEDITED, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, April 14 (Bernama) -- Inter-state coordination of water supply could be carried out at the earliest possible time because states have recognised the urgency of the water problem, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We'll supply Pulau Pinang, for instance with water from Kedah and Perak while Selangor can get it from Pahang," he told reporters after opening a seminar on virtual reality in Sungai Besi near here.

He said despite the high costs of inter-state water transfer since it would require supply pipelines crossing hilly terrain, such a solution to the water problem could be done.

The federal government has discussed the matter with the states and they appreciated the need for them to cooperate, the prime minister said.

The issue was also raised among Menteris Besar during the meeting of the Umno Supreme Council, said Dr Mahathir who is also Umno president.

The prime minister said the federal government has no intention of taking over power of the states over water but merely to see coordination in the matter.

"We've tried for a long time to set up a National Water Council but each state wants to remain in control over its water.

"This is the problem...we don't intend to usurp the states' power but merely to coordinate so that surplus water from one state can be supplied to another not having enough water," said Dr Mahathir.

Replying to a question, Dr Mahathir said the current water supply problem was not affecting investment in the country.

"I don't think it will affect the flow of investments because (for) future investment, we will make provisions for that. This is an unusual period, we don't get this kind of drought every year," he said.

Asked whether state water management was also to blame for the problem, he said some states could not possibly predict the prolonged drought this time around.

Since water was under state jurisdiction, some states would have thought that they were sufficiently prepared for the worse, he said.

On whether industries have been asked to cut down production due to water shortage, the prime minister said he was not aware of that.

"I don't know whether they have been asked to but I think they must make provisions for that. In some places, even the industries have dug their own wells but we cannot have too many of that."

Asked about the finger-pointing in the wake of the water crisis in the Klang Valley, he replied smilingly: "Well, we point fingers at everybody, the Press point fingers at us, we have to point fingers at other people."

-- BERNAMA

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