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Mahathir - water

STATES AGREE TO WATER PACT, NO CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, June 29 (Bernama) -- All states have agreed to cooperate to facilitate inter-state water supply without amending their respective state constitutions at all, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

For this purpose, they have also agreed to rename the National Water Council as the National Water Resources Council, which held its inaugural meeting at the Prime Minister's Department here chaired by Dr Mahathir.

The council will have its secretariat at the Works Ministry here.

Speaking at a press conference after the meeting, the prime minister said the council also discussed methods of inter-state transfer of water and whether the states were to charge for raw or treated water.

The meeting also deliberated on domestic water-use and for purposes of power-generation and agriculture, he said.

The prime minister said the meeting however did not decide on any other matter.

"We only discuss and did not make decision as some think there's no need to pay for raw water while others suggest payment," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there was also the opinion that in the case of a river from a state flowing into another, the benefits that it brought to both should be taken into account.

Citing an example, the prime minister said Kedah supplied water to Pulau Pinang for free but Kedah charged for the water it supplied Perlis.

So was the case with Johor which supplied water to Melaka for a fee but Negeri Sembilan, which also supplied water to Melaka, did not charge anything, he said.

Asked whether with the establishment of the council, water would now come under the federal government, the prime minister said: "Water is still under the state government."

Asked whether a national grid for water supply, akin to that for power, was necessary, Dr Mahathir said such a network was not needed since inter-state water transfer would at the most involve two states.

On current measures to ensure sufficient water supply, he said local action must be taken to optimise water usage and minimise wastage.

"The water is there... but much is wasted like through leaking pipes," he said.

On measures by states to check encroachment into catchment areas, the prime minister said all the state governments have given the assurance that they would prohibit development of such areas.

He said with the rain falling more regularly now, reservoirs were being refilled but in urgent cases the government would give priority to ensuring ample supply to the commercial and industrial sectors.

"But these measures are not to the extent of totally denying others of water supply," he said.

The prime minister said the meeting was in no position to resolve the water problems in detail.

The council's secretariat at the Works Ministry would prepare a detailed paper on each of the matters raised at the meeting, he said.

Present at the two-hour meeting were menteri besar, chief ministers or their representatives alongside Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Lim Keng Yaik, Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding and Agriculture Minister

Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud, among others.
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