

18/04/1998

Understanding over water supply to Singapore after 2061 reached

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Malaysia and Singapore have reached an understanding over water supply to the republic after year 2061 but Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today no agreement would be signed as yet.

Dr Mahathir expressed confidence that the matter could be settled soon.

"We are working on it," he said after paying a farewell call on Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

Museveni, who is on a four-day visit, will leave on Sunday. Dr Mahathir will be in Johor over the weekend.

The Prime Minister said as water fell under the jurisdiction of the States, the Federal Government had to first discuss the matter with the State Governments.

The current water supply agreement between Malaysia and Singapore expires in 2061 and Singapore is seeking negotiations for a new agreement to begin immediately.

However, Malaysia feels that a new agreement should only be negotiated closer to the date of expiry of the current agreement.

Malaysia has, however, assured Singapore that it would not stop water supply after 2061.

In February, Malaysia made an undertaking to continue supplying water to Singapore after 2061 but made it clear that negotiations on the terms would only be made as the expiry of the current agreement draws closer.

The continued supply will be on terms and conditions to be mutually agreed on between the two governments. The undertaking will be confirmed in an agreement within 60 days.

Under the present agreement, Singapore draws 1,527 billion litres of untreated water daily at a cost of three sen per 4,540 litres.

Asked to elaborate on the understanding which has been reached, Dr Mahathir said:

"(It is) regarding the continuation of supplies and the conditions for supplying (water)," he said.

On a report today that a delegation of Malaysian businessmen in Tanzania was ordered out of the country, Dr Mahathir said:

"I don't know what is the reason. I can't give you an answer."

The seven-member delegation representing Independent Power Tanzania Ltd was ordered to leave the country "on the first available flight" by the permanent secretary of Tanzania's Ministry of Energy and Mines Patrick Rutabanzibwa.

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