

'Increases in water tariff rates inevitable'

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SHAH ALAM, Sun. — Water tariff increases are inevitable, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Any weaknesses we can overcome, but the water tariff increase will remain," he told a Press conference after attending the New Millennium Patriotism gathering at the Malawati Stadium here.

He said this in reply to a question on reports of an impending water tariff hike for Selangor.

Dr Mahathir said it was inappropriate for water tariffs to remain at their present rates, while most other items recorded an increase in price.

"Salaries, including those working in the water provision companies go up, so surely costs will increase also. As such, we cannot maintain the price indefinitely," he said, adding that the aim was to ensure that income increased more rapidly than prices of goods.

On the negative influence of the supposedly excessive Hindi films being aired on television, Dr Mahathir said an objective study needed to be conducted to determine whether there was any link between acts of violence and Hindi films.

He said if a link was established,

Hindi films could be banned.

Dr Mahathir was also asked by a Japanese reporter to explain his repeated reminders on the need for Malaysians to master English.

The Prime Minister said it was mainly because most research as well as new technologies and discoveries were recorded in English.

"We cannot translate into our language because there is far too much for us to translate.

"The easier thing to do is to understand English so that we can read directly without waiting for someone to translate it."

On whether the command of English among Malaysians was inadequate for the country to become Information Technology-developed, Dr Mahathir replied that proficiency among the people was not spread out as widely as needed.

"Only a portion of the Malaysian population has a good command of English. A lot of people do not understand English and because of that they cannot make use of computers and the Internet."

Dr Mahathir said this lack of proficiency in the English language was in part causing the digital divide.