

# PM: Vital to resolve water issue

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KAJANG: Malaysia cannot afford to wait any longer to reach an agreement on outstanding bilateral issues with Singapore, especially on the price of water to be supplied to the island republic, because Kuala Lumpur stands to lose out if negotiations prolong.

Prime-Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia wanted to resolve the water issue as soon as possible because "the longer we wait, the more we lose."

Asked if there was a time-frame to reach an agreement, he said: "We will see what happens when the officials meet, it can't go on forever."

In December 1998, Dr Mahathir and his Singapore

counterpart Goh Chok Tong had agreed that water, the KTMB railway land problem, the CIQ checkpoints, the issue of rights for Singapore aircraft to fly over Malaysian airspace and CPF withdrawal be resolved as a package.

Singapore has two agreements with Johor for water supply - one expiring in 2011 and the other in 2061.

Speaking to reporters after launching a job fair at UKM in Bangi yesterday, Dr Mahathir said when the price of water was first determined, Singapore was about to join Malaysia.

The agreement, he said, was drawn up by the British administration in favour of Singapore.

"The attitude then was different. It (Singapore) was not

a foreign country as such," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Singapore had been paying three sen per 4,540 litres of water as compared to Hong Kong which paid RM8 to China for the same amount.

He said Singapore asked for a cheaper price but Malaysia could not accept the figure.

"We asked that Singapore pay more than 45 sen per 4,540 litres of water and there be a revision.

"But we cannot reveal the prices that we seek," Dr Mahathir added.

On Parti Keadilan Nasional, Dr Mahathir said PAS had no sympathy for Keadilan when they worked together.

He said PAS leaders saw a chance to consolidate their power when Keadilan was first formed.

"When (former deputy prime minister) Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was in Umno, PAS had already accused him

of having no morals.

"When they can use someone, they will not hesitate to use them," Dr Mahathir added.

He was responding to a news report on the admission by PAS 'spiritual leader' Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat that the party had used Keadilan for its own political purposes.

Nik Aziz added that the situation was similar to Barisan Nasional component parties which used each other.