

Singapore was ready to go to war'

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Muhyiddin: Kuan Yew said it at meeting

By Shahrum Sayuthi

news@nstp.com.my

SENAI, Sun. -- Water supply from Johor is of such importance to Singapore that it had once expressed willingness to declare war against Malaysia if it is cut off, former Johor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin revealed today.

Muhyiddin, who is also Umno vice-president, said the threat was made by Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew in the early 1990s when he was still Singapore Prime Minister.

"It was at a meeting to discuss the water agreement issue. I was there along with the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad), (the then Finance Minister) Tun Daim Zainuddin and Lee Kuan Yew.

"Lee told us that Singapore is willing to go to war with Malaysia if the water supply from Johor is cut off," he said at the Senai Umno divisional meeting today.

Later, when asked by reporters, Muhyiddin said he was not sure how serious the threat was but it illustrated the importance of the

water supply from Johor to the republic

"Whether it is a serious threat or not, you have to ask Lee. Maybe he was just joking, but the point is that the water supply from Johor is very important to them (Singapore)," he said.

Commenting on a recent statement by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong that the republic should look for other sources of water, Muhyiddin said he would welcome such a move.

"That will be very good. We, in Johor, may need the water anyway. Who knows .., we may face a water shortage in 20 or 30 years," he said.

On a call yesterday by Singapore MP Ong Ah Heng that Singaporeans should refrain from shopping in Johor, Muhyiddin said it was an example of how diplomatically immature some Singapore leaders are.

He said Ong's statement was irresponsible and would further complicate the relations between Malaysia and the republic.

"They (Singapore leaders) claim they are so diplomatically advanced, but in this instance, I think they are the ones who need to attend diplomacy classes," he said, referring to an earlier statement by Singapore MP R. Ravindran.

Ravindran had suggested that Malaysian leaders attend diplomatic courses over the ongoing spat concerning the republic's reclamation works.