

# ***PM: It's fine if water pact not renewed***

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**By SHAHANA AZ HABIB**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** It is "all right" with Malaysia if Singapore does not want to renew a water agreement with Johor that expires in 2011, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Malaysia could stop supplying water to Singapore even now if the republic wanted this, the Prime Minister said.

"No need to wait until 2011. It can start even now; (if they want) we can stop supplying them water," he told reporters after opening the 2002 Women Entrepreneurs National Convention here yesterday.

He pointed out that Malaysia was losing money by selling water to Singapore at three sen per 1,000 gallons.

"If they stop taking from us, then we don't lose any money.

We can sell to our people at more than three sen for 1,000 gallons," he added.

On Monday, Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong told Domestic Trade and Industry Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin that Singapore was not renewing one of the two water agreements it has with Johor as it wanted to reduce water dependency on Malaysia.

Muhyiddin said the Singapore Government would allow the agreement that ends in 2011 to lapse and would depend on supply from the other water agreement that will expire in 2061 as well as develop alternative sources of water.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia was doing Singapore a favour by selling water to them.

"Can you imagine a price fixed in 1927 at three sen per 1,000 gallons and we are still being paid three sen per 1,000 gallons 75 years later?"

"Can you tell me anything that was sold at three sen in 1927 that is today sold at three sen?"

"If you (Singapore) can show me anything that is sold at that price, then I'll be happy to entertain you and go on being paid three sen," he said.

He questioned whether it was fair for Singapore to buy raw water at three sen per 1,000 gallons and later sell it for ~~S\$20~~ per 1,000 gallons.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to supply the republic water.

"We promised them we will continue to supply them with water, not for them to sell it at a profit, but to give them

water for the sufficient use of Singapore," he said.

On another issue, the Prime Minister reiterated that bumiputra entrepreneurs should stop depending on the Government for contracts and learn to compete in an open market environment.

Dr Mahathir said currently 100% of bumiputra contractors depended on government contracts for their business.

He added that even with government contracts, the bumiputras were not willing to compete among themselves.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir had slammed the attitude of Malay entrepreneurs who wanted an assurance that the Government would buy up 100% of their products.

"If you rely on the Go-

vernment to give you the orders, you are not competing in the real market."

Dr Mahathir also said the Government would use a new approach in the "One Village One Product" programme.

He said instead of leaving it entirely to the villagers, the Government would try and get capable individuals to open up small factories and employ villagers as workers.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said he was not happy with the achievement of women in business but added they had nevertheless done better than the men.

On how he felt about a woman deputy prime minister in the future, Dr Mahathir said: "It's okay if people want to have one. I have no objections. It's okay too, if we have a woman prime minister."