

# Dr M: We won't use water as a weapon

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JEDDAH: Malaysia will not use water as a weapon against Singapore despite a price disparity that is causing a stumbling block to negotiations, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"We are selling water to Singapore at three sen per 1,000 gallons and they sell treated water at S\$20 or RM40 per 1,000 gallons.

"Obviously there is a big disparity on how much Singapore pays us and how much money they make from the supply of water," he said.

The Prime Minister said the three sen per 1,000 gallons rate was fixed in 1927 by the British and it was used in favour of Singapore because the British ruled the republic and Johor was a protected state.

"Is there anything that was sold at three sen in 1927 which is sold at three sen today? The answer is only this water. That is why we ask Singapore to renegotiate," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had also given Singapore a guarantee that Malaysia would not cut off water supply.

"In other words, Singapore

will have sufficient water to drink and bathe. But of course, it is a different thing if you want to use our water to make huge profits for yourself," he said.

Dr Mahathir was at a press conference after a dialogue with the business community here and members of the Jeddah Chambers of Commerce and Industry yesterday.

On calls by Muslim countries that he take the lead in protecting Muslims worldwide from being oppressed, Dr Mahathir said he could not do it alone and there was a need for them to be united to protect their interest.

"Muslims and the West must think rationally and not be emotionally-driven in their decision.

"Americans are angry because for the first time, their country had been attacked and the Muslims are angry because they have been accused as if every one of us is guilty.

"So the response to that is, of course, not quite rational on both sides," he said.

He said what Malaysia was trying to do was to tell the US the way to deal with terrorism was not by erecting barriers or to take security measures

because it was not fighting a war with another country.

"The way to fight this thing (terrorism) is to be rational.

"Let us sit down and think why people, some of whom with families, are behaving like this," he added.

On rumours that money was floated from the West, particularly from the US, to East Asian countries, including Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said it was untrue.

"Well, I wish it is true but I have not seen the money yet.

"There are a lot of accusations that we are laundering illegal money. That also we have not noticed, at least not in Malaysia.

"I am sure the money is floating somewhere but has not come to Malaysia. We hope it will come, I mean good money and not money from selling drugs or whatever," he added.

Later, Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin left for Mecca to perform the *umrah* (small haj).

■ Still deadlocked after four years: P6