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Mahathir-Water

DR M: NO OBJECTION IF S'PORE DOES NOT WANT TO BUY WATER

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysia does not have any objection should Singapore decide not to buy water from the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"That (if Singapore decides not to buy water from Malaysia) is fine, we have no objection. If they do not want to buy our water, there is no problem, we would take over all the treatment plants and we will pay compensation," he said.

He said it did not matter if Singapore wanted to stop buying the important commodity from Malaysia as the country was also in need of water for future needs.

"This is because we need water for ourselves. Honestly, there will come a time (when) Johor (the closest Malaysian state to Singapore) would be short of water. We need the water for ourselves," he told reporters at the end of the second day of the 56th Umno General Assembly.

Malaysian and Singapore officials are expected to meet in Kuala Lumpur on July 1 for bilateral talks and the water supply issue is expected to be decided at the meeting.

Malaysia wanted a higher price for the water it was selling to Singapore over the last 30 years and had made reference to the price of water sold by China to Hong Kong.

China sold water to Hong Kong for RM8 per 1,000 gallons (4,500 litres) and Malaysia wants a higher price for the raw water sold to Singapore from the mere 3 sen per 1,000 gallons.

Asked about Singapore's contention that China sold treated water to Hong Kong while Malaysia supplied raw water, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was prepared to sell treated water to Singapore for RM8 per gallon.

"My information is that they (China) supplied raw water but even if it was treated water at RM8 (per 1,000 gallons), we are quite happy to sell it at the same price if they are prepared to buy.

"The operational cost (to treat the raw water is RM1.20 (per 1,000 gallons). So, at the most it would cost us RM1.20 and we would be happy to sell at RM8," the Umno president said.

On his recent telephone calls to Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, Dr Mahathir said it appeared that somebody want him to intervene to defuse tension between the two neighbours.

"Apparently, somebody wants me to intervene and what they did was to tell President Musharraf that I want to speak to him and then tell me that president Musharraf wants to speak to me.

"The same thing happened with the Prime Minister of India. I was told that he wanted to speak to me and when I talked to him, he told me that he thought I wanted to speak to him," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there was somebody trying to "get me involved but I'm not committed to anything."

He said Malaysia had made its stand clear that it was against all forms of terrorism whether it was cross-border or otherwise.

"We condemn all kinds of terrorism whether cross-border or not but we also say that we have to look at the causes. If you don't look at the causes and remove the causes, then there will be terrorism.

"Of course, you can accuse states of being involved (in terrorism). Israel, for example, is definitely involved (in terrorism). Pakistan denies

it is involved...it is not for me to judge, the fact is the causes are there... people are blowing themselves up because they are angry about something.

"So, we have to find the causes and remove them, otherwise how are we going to stop terrorism?" he said.

-- BERNAMA

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