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Mahathir-Singapore

DR MAHATHIR HOPES M'SIA-SINGAPORE CAN REACH AGREEMENT ON WATER SOON

PETALING JAYA, Jan 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he hopes that Malaysia and Singapore can reach an agreement on the sale of water to the republic soon.

Though admitting that not much progress had been made on the issue since his meeting with Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew last year, he said he did not consider the delay as a deadlock.

"According to the agreement (on the subject matter), we must agree to the new price. So we have not yet agreed on the new price.

"It has to be resolved. The longer the agreement is delayed the more money lost," he said when asked on the latest development on the issue.

Dr Mahathir said that when he met Lee last year, both of them did not reach any agreement on the issue.

"When we met, we only reached agreement on the subject matter...that's all. Now it is up to the officials to go and discuss," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had to stick to certain terms so that Malaysia would not lose in terms of revenue.

"Singapore will not settle unless the price of water is competitive. We are asking for a very reasonable low price for our water," he told reporters after launching the Puteri Umno community centre in Taman Seri Manja, here.

He said Malaysia only charged the republic three sen per thousand gallons of raw water while Singapore charged 50 sen per thousand gallons for the treated water which it sold back to Malaysia.

"We also know that Singapore sells to the ships 1,000 gallons of treated water for S\$20. So you see the margin," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was willing to "give and take" but would not compromise on the issue.

"Give and take yes. But not compromise. I believe in give and take but they must give some and we must take some," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had been selling the raw water for three sen per thousand gallons for so many years.

Malaysia currently supplies raw water to Singapore under agreements that will expire in 2061. A new supply contract is included in a package of outstanding bilateral issues being discussed between the two countries for the past three years.

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