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PM: Singapore reluctant to solve water issue

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Singapore seems reluctant to solve the water supply issue with Malaysia so that they could enjoy the three sen per 1,000 gallons charged on the republic, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"It shows that they (Singapore) are not keen to settle because as long as the price is not settled, they will continue to get three sen per 1,000 gallons," he told reporters after closing a two-day seminar on gold dinar, here today.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on a news report today that Singapore had asked for a reduction from its original asking price of 45 sen per 1,000 gallons to 12 sen per 1,000 gallons.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia had taken an undertaking to supply Singapore with water for its needs.

"This means that the water is for bathing, drinking and washing and not to sell it for profit. But Singapore sells 1,000 gallons of treated water at S\$20, which is equivalent to about RM40.

"They use water for washing a little bit, and sell water for RM40. And (yet they are) complaining that our asking price is too high. What about the profit they had gained from selling treated water?" he said.

Responding to Singapore's request for a reduction in the asking price, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia might have to increase its asking price from 60 sen.

"They (Singapore) have proposed 45 sen, we asked for 60 sen. Now they want to reduce it to 12 sen, now we have to increase ours," he said.

Asked how much Malaysia would seek Dr Mahathir said it was for Malaysia to negotiate.

"We should see what is the true price. If you buy something, it must reflect market price. You cannot expect special prices on the basis of some ancient pieces of paper," he said.

Dr Mahathir dismissed the notion that negotiations over the issue were back to square one since Singapore had asked for a reduction.

"No, not square one. We are making progress. It's progress ...from 45 sen to 12 sen," he said.