

22 JAN 2002

PM-WATER

M'SIA WANTS TO SETTLE WATER ISSUE WITH S'PORE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

BANGI, Jan 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says Malaysia wants to settle the water supply issue with Singapore as soon as possible.

"However, there are some problems about reaching the price," he told reporters at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Career Day here today.

Dr Mahathir explained that Malaysia could not agree on the price wanted by Singapore at 45 sen per 1,000 gallons.

"This is because Hong Kong pays RM8.00 per 1,000 gallons of water it gets from mainland China."

He said officials are doing preliminary work on the water issue.

Dr Mahathir yesterday admitted that there was little progress on the matter.

But he had said that he was willing to "give and take" but not compromise on the issue.

Malaysia currently supplies raw water to Singapore at three per 1,000 gallons (4,500 litres) and buys treated water at 45 sen per 1,000 gallons (4,500 litres) from Singapore in return.

Dr Mahathir said the price of three sen was determined when Singapore was about to join Malaysia in the early 1960s and the attitude was different then.

The water agreement drawn up by the British was in favour of Singapore because they (British) also advised the Johor government then, he said.

It had been reported that Johor plans to stop buying treated water from plants managed by Singapore Public Utilities Board after this year.

At present Johor supplies 910 million litres of water from Singapore daily and buys back 130 million litres of treated water.

Dr Mahathir also said the Malaysian government is currently studying a proposal by Gerbang Perdana Sdn Bhd to build a bridge linking Malaysia and Singapore. -- BERNAMA

SHO SHY