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Mahathir-Water

SEPARATING WATER FROM OTHER ISSUES CAN SOLVE SOME PROBLEMS, SAYS DR M

CYBERJAYA, Sept 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today separating the water issue from other matters will help find a solution to some of the outstanding problems with Singapore.

"Well to us, it doesn't matter whether to link or not. We can deal separately if they want, but I think by not linking water (with other outstanding issues) would perhaps enable us to solve some of our problems because Singapore was not very reasonable in terms of pricing the water," he told reporters when asked about the deadlock on the water talks with the island republic.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir held a one-to-one meeting with the International Advisory Panel (IAP) members and representatives for the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia and Singapore might have to go for arbitration if the water talks failed.

"Well, worse come to worse, we may have to go for arbitration, but Singapore must realise they can't impose on us like this simply because the terms of agreement says that both sides must agree," he said.

Asked whether there should be a time frame to solve the problem, Dr Mahathir said: "I think there must be some time frame but I don't know what time frame."

He said Malaysia should in fact revised the water pricing long time ago.

"Actually, we should have revised the water price 18 years ago. Now, (we are) losing money everyday at such a low price (three sen per 1,000 gallons).

"There is nothing that cost three sen in 1957 that can be bought with three sen in 2002," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Singapore seemed to be not accepting the reality.

"Even if they want to use waste water, the cost is very high almost seven or eight dollars. If the source is raw water and after being treated, the cost is still cheaper," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would be happy if Singapore did not want Malaysian water.

"But it is their choice. We will be happy if they don't want the water because we are losing money. So, if they feel they can source their water from elsewhere, we are quite happy about it," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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