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Dr M: We are prepared to take over

reports on "Umno General Assembly 2002" by Zubaidah Abu Bakar; Hamidah Atan; Aionon Mohd; Patrick Sennyah; Firdaus Abdullah; Chow Kum Hor; Hamzah Jamaludin; Sheridan Mahavera; Farrah Naz Karim

THE Government is prepared to take over water treatment plants in Johor which are operated by Singapore if the republic no longer sees the need to purchase water from Malaysia, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had no objection if there was such an intention and was prepared to pay adequate compensation.

"Honestly, there will come a time when Johor will be short of water... we will need the water for ourselves.

"If they (Singapore) do not want to buy water from us, there is no problem," he said in reply to a hypothetical question raised by a MediaCorp International journalist from Singapore during a Press conference at the Putra World Trade Centre.

On Thursday, the Prime Minister had said it was ridiculous for Malaysia to continue selling water to Singapore at three sen per thousand gallons considering Hong Kong paid China RM8 for the same volume.

Told today that the RM8 paid by Hong Kong to China was for treated water, while Malaysia supplied Singapore with raw water, Dr Mahathir said the Government was also prepared to supply treated water to the republic at the same price.

"The treatment cost is only RM1.20 per thousand gallons... we will be happy to sell them the water (treated) at RM8," he said.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir was presented with a book entitled Revolusi Mental by Utusan Malaysia group editor-in-chief Datuk Khalid Mohamad.

The book, which is the latest edition, was first published in 1971 after the racial riots in 1969 and is aimed at transforming the mindset of the Malays.

Among the original writers of the book are Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir said after the 1969 incident, there was a marked improvement in the progress of the Malays.

"However, this was only temporary and they quickly forgot (on the need for progress and betterment). That is why I have repeatedly said Melayu mudah lupa.

"They are in a revolution mood for a while and then go into reverse gear," he said in jest.

On his disappointment over the achievements of the Malays so far, the Prime Minister said that while they have improved considerably, they were capable of a lot more.

"I am not denying there has been success among them. What I am saying is that it is not enough".

Dr Mahathir said the Government had no time frame as to when it may further reduce the protection enjoyed by the Malays and that it would only be considered when they (Malays) are competent enough to stand on their own.

"When the Malays can compete with anyone and succeed, then I don't think they would need anymore protection," he said.

Asked about Pas' deputy president Datuk Seri Hadi Awang's readiness to meet Umno over the proposal to implement Pas' hudud in Terengganu, Dr Mahathir said there was no need for such a meeting.

"We do not want to talk to him... the issue (hudud) is purely Pas' politics to deceive the Malays and has nothing to do with laws," he said, adding that the issue was also not in the interest of Islam.

He said the Government knew some of the younger generation in Pas did not believe that they could actually form the Government through the democratic process and that they were pursuing violence as the only means to rule.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians who had gone to Pakistan and Afghanistan to master "violence" were mostly young Pas members.

"I am not saying that Pas leaders are directly involved in this, but because of their insistence to set up an Islamic State, the younger Pas members have been led to believe that the only way to achieve this is through violence and not through the democratic process," he added.

Asked if the Government would release a White Paper on militancy in Malaysia, Abdullah who is also Home Minister said it was being prepared and would be released after investigations and related court cases were completed.

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