

23 OCT 2002

Mahathir-Water

M'SIA MAY REVISE UPWARD ITS WATER PRICE PROPOSAL- DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government may ask Singapore to pay more than 60 sen for every 1,000 gallons of raw water it buys from Malaysia.

The Prime Minister the new price would be negotiated with Singapore based on the current market price.

"That is for us to negotiate, you see what is the true price? When you buy something it must reflect market price."

"You can't expect special price on the basis of some ancient piece of paper," he told reporters after closing the international seminar on "Gold Dinars in Multilateral Trades" here today.

He was asked to comment on a news report from Singapore quoting him as saying that the republic had revised its initial proposal from 45 sen to 12 sen for every 1,000 gallons of raw water it bought from Malaysia.

"They proposed 45 sen but now they have reduced it to 12 sen, so I think we should revise our proposal and ask for 60 sen or more," he said.

"We have given an undertaking that we will always supply Singapore with sufficient water for its needs, which means water for drinking, bathing, and for washing and not water to sell and make tremendous profits," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Singapore sold 1,000 gallons of treated water to ships for S\$20 which was equivalent to RM40.

"You buy something at three sen, clean it a little bit, and then you sell it at RM40, how many per cent is that?"

"They are complaining that we are asking for a price that is 1,000 per cent (more), but from three sen to RM40, how many percent is that? I am not a good mathematician," he said.

He said the downward revision of water pricing by Singapore showed that the country was not keen to settle the issue.

He said Singapore believed that for as long as the water price problem was not settled, they could continue to get water at three sen.

On whether the downward revision of water price by Singapore would mean that Malaysia and Singapore were going back to square one, the Prime Minister said:

"No, not square one, its progress, from three sen to 12 sen, that is 400 per cent increase."

Asked why was it so difficult to find a middle ground for the water price, Dr Mahathir said:

"Well their middle ground is to suggest 45 sen, our middle ground is 60 sen, now they reduce it to 12 sen, our middle ground would be more than 60 sen."

Asked whether the government had decided to take action against Rohan Gunaratna, the author of the book "Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror", Dr Mahathir said they were studying the book.

"According to the book that we have with us, it does not really say that the Barisan Nasional is linked to Al-Qaeda but it does say that the BN has some contacts with MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front)."

"The BN government does have contact with MILF because we were helping the Philippine Government to resolve their problems in the south," he said.

Representatives of the MILF were here sometime ago and they signed an agreement with the Philippines, witnessed by Malaysian Government representatives.

Dr Mahathir said the United Nations had not responded to the protest made by Malaysia against the report which linked Malaysia with the Al-Qaeda.

"The UN Report clearly links the Barisan Nasional to the Al-Qaeda but Gunaratna's book does not say Al-Qaeda, it says with the MILF," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia was still interested in knowing how Gunaratna got information about Malaysia in his book.

Asked to comment on the anti-terror decree signed by President Megawati, Dr Mahathir said he believed that because of what happened in Bali, it would strengthen her hand in handling this issue.

"If she had done it before, there may be accusations that she was trying to suppress the Muslims or something else, but now this thing has happened, I think Indonesians by and large agree and support the view that there are terrorists in Indonesia and they must be handled," he said.

-- BERNAMA
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