

Dr M: Water supply to republic forever

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JOHOR BARU: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday assured Singapore that Malaysia will supply water to the republic "forever".

However, the prime minister said only treated water will be supplied in the future after the expiry of the two water agreements.

"We hold to our country's pledge; I assure Singaporeans that we will supply water to them forever ... and we will supply filtered water to Singapore until Doomsday. So, Singapore need not worry," he said at a goodwill gathering in conjunction with the ground-breaking ceremony of the integrated south gateway project and a public housing project here.

Mahathir said Malaysia had the capability to supply treated water to Singapore as it had acquired the necessary technology.

"We have also learnt how to filter water; we also can filter water ... pay a reasonable price for getting water, no need to use other sources," he said referring to Singapore resorting to recycling sewage water to fulfil the republic's needs.

Malaysia and Singapore signed two water agreements, one in 1961 and the other in 1962. Under the 1961 agreement, Singapore can draw 80 million gallons of water per day from the Pulau catchment area, Sungai Tebrau and Sungai Skudai in Johor until Aug 31, 2011.

The 1962 agreement allows Singapore to get 50 million gallons daily from Sungai Johor until Sept 28, 2061.

Malaysia currently supplies raw

water to Singapore at three sen per 1,000 gallons and buys treated water from it at 50 sen per 1,000 gallons.

He said the Johor government currently sells raw water to Malacca at 30 sen per 1,000 gallons, which is far more expensive than the supply to Singapore.

"We are asking for a reasonable price, but they don't seem to want to give us a fair price ... they hope to delay it until 2011, by which time the agreement is ended ... if they settle now they have to pay (more)," he said.

Mahathir said Malaysia had

always regarded Singapore not only as a good friend but also as an independent neighbour which should be respected.

"We are friends; they are an independent nation. We respect their independence ... we want to be good neighbours," he said, adding that the war talk indulged by certain parties was not the best way to resolve the water issue.

Mahathir said despite the many outstanding issues between the two countries, "all these problems can be resolved if there is goodwill on both sides".