

We will keep our promise, says PM

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JOHOR BARU: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has assured Singapore that it can continue to source water, whether raw or treated, from Malaysia.

"Malaysia will continue to supply water to you until doomsday.

"You don't have to worry about that because we will keep our promise.

"If we cannot supply you with raw water, we can replace that with treated water," he said at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Gerbang Selatan Bersepadu project, which consists of a new Customs, Immigration and Quarantine Complex (CIQ), a bridge and a railway station, here, yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had no intention to stop water supply to the republic because the country practised good neighbourly manners.

"Malaysians and Singaporeans are brothers and sisters who happen to be separated by the Tebrau Straits, so there is no reason for us to hate Singaporeans.

"We love you Singaporeans on this

Valentine's Day and we welcome everyone of you to our country," he said to applause from some 2,000 people who attended the ceremony.

Dr Mahathir said talk about war between the two countries should Malaysia stop supplying water to Singapore should not arise because war would not resolve any conflict.

The Prime Minister also revealed that Malaysia's proposal to Singapore to jointly build a bridge to replace the 80-year-old Johor Causeway was not favoured by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chock Tong.

He said he was made to understand that Goh had refused to allow the causeway to be demolished because the structure was nostalgic to him.

"(Singapore Senior Minister) Lee (Kuan Yew) even suggested to me that we build the bridge after Goh retires," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who spoke openly about the plan which was mooted in 1996, said he had had a "four-eyed meeting" with Lee about replacing the causeway.

"I have never told anyone about this but I am telling you here today since my letters (with Lee about the water agreements) have been published," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he decided to reveal the story of his meeting with Lee to inform the public, especially Singaporeans, that Malaysia had never ignored the republic when it came out with the plan.

He said Malaysia could not wait until Goh retired to start constructing the bridge and the new CIQ because the demand for larger facilities was already at its peak.

"The bridge will also allow water in the Tebrau Straits to flow freely, which will eventually promote a better environment."

Dr Mahathir said the new CIQ would also change the "character" of Johor Baru to one of the most modern in the country with new landmarks, landscaping and a highway.

"Squatters will also be removed and relocated to better places with better living environment."