

PM: We'll tell our side of the story

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Government will tell its side of the story in response to Singapore's publication of a book on the stalled water talks.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government would, however, not disclose letters written in confidence by the leaders of the two countries.

"We will give our version of the issue in the newspapers and explain every point but we will not publish private letters.

"It is something that is unethical. We follow strictly international practice. Private letters are not to be displayed to the people," he said yesterday after opening a conference on the

gold dinar at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He was responding to a book the Singapore Information, Communications and Arts Ministry had published on the stalled water talks entitled *Water Talks? If Only It Could*.

In it, Malaysia is accused of "shifting goalposts" on negotiations over bilateral issues, and letters exchanged between Dr Mahathir and Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew have been included.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said he could not even write to Singapore leaders now because "it will be used as propaganda."

"We can't reach an agreement. They have made public (the negotiations), so it is difficult. Even writing a letter is

difficult because it can be used as evidence against you," he said.

The people, he added, ought to know how unjust the current situation was to Malaysia.

"It is a simple question. Is there still anything that is now sold at the same price as it was in 1927?

"Whether it is three sen (the price Singapore now pays Malaysia for every 1,000 gallons of raw water), 45 sen, 60 sen or three dollars, it is something we have to negotiate, but definitely not three sen," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the Government's position on the water issue would remain unchanged even after his retirement.

"It is the same Government, only a different head," he said.