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Mahathir-Water

FEDERAL CONTROL OF WATER WILL NOT AFFECT SUPPLY TO S'PORE

PUTRAJAYA, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the federal government's move to take over management of water supply from the states will not affect Malaysia's water supply to Singapore.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would continue to supply raw water to the republic as stipulated in the two agreements signed between the two countries.

"We will supply water to Singapore. We have made a promise and we will fulfil it," he told a media conference after witnessing the signing of a contract between the government and contractor Gerbang Perdana Sdn Bhd for the construction of a land bridge, a rail bridge and other works involving the Gerbang Selatan Bersepadu project.

Dr Mahathir was asked whether the federal government's move, announced by Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu two days ago, would have any effect on the supply of water to the island republic.

Malaysia is now locked in dispute with Singapore over the latter's refusal to increase the price of raw water it buys from Malaysia, which is three sen per 1,000 gallons, to a more reasonable level.

Singapore claims that Malaysia has lost its right to a price review after failing to do so in 1986 and 1987, exactly 25 years after the signing of the water agreements in 1961 and 1962.

However, Clause 17 of the 1961 Water Agreement and Clause 14 of the 1962 Water Agreement state that the price of water is subject to review after the end of a 25-year period.

Malaysia feels that it still has the right to a review because 25 years after 1961 and 1962 means anytime after 1986 and 1987, not in 1986 and 1987.

Dr Mahathir was also queried on advertisements taken out by both sides in newspapers recently to explain their respective stands on the water dispute.

To this, he responded: "I think the period of talking and negotiating is now over. We want to have arbitration.

"According to the provisions of the agreements, if there is a dispute that cannot be settled, then go for arbitration."

He also said that there had been no communication between both parties since the publication of the advertisements.

-- BERNAMA

MAM YBY