

30 JAN 2003

Mahathir-water

MALAYSIA TO CONTINUE TO SUPPLY WATER AFTER 2061

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia will continue to supply water to Singapore after the agreement expires in 2061 but it will be treated water at a higher price.

"We intend to continue supplying them with water. In fact, we guarantee Singaporeans that we will always supply them with enough water for them to drink and bathe," the prime minister told newsmen after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting here.

"We will supply them in the form of treated water, and of course treating water costs money and therefore we will sell treated water to them at a higher price," he added.

Dr Mahathir said it was not Malaysia's intention to deprive Singaporeans of water and the news report by a local daily which stated that Malaysia would stop supplying Singapore with water in the year 2061 was wrong but instead it was just on raw water.

He said Malaysians regard Singaporeans as neighbours or brothers and sisters as a lot of Malaysians have relatives there, and vice versa.

Touching on the revision of the price of raw water Malaysia supplies to Singapore, he said, it was ridiculous to suggest that Malaysia should continue to sell them water at three sen per thousand gallons until 2061.

He said: "Of course, we have to raise our price and this is within our agreement. The agreement says that after 25 years we can revise the price of water but no timeline was given.

"If it (agreement) says that as soon as you reach 25 years, you must immediately revise, that is a different matter but that was not what was in the agreement."

The prime minister said the allegation that the water problem was not a question of the price of water but a question of Singapore's sovereignty was the invention of Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar.

Dr Mahathir said that Jayakumar must know of course, that it was Malaysia who gave Singapore the status of a sovereign nation.

Before this, Singapore was just a part of Malaysia and there was no reason why Malaysia should undermine the republic's sovereignty, he said, adding that in any case it is absurd to suggest sovereignty was a function of the price of water.

He said: "We sell water to them all these years even at a time when they were a British colony when no question of sovereignty arose. Now they are trying to link it to sovereignty by saying that the price of water is not important.

"I am quite sure that it (price of water) is not important to them because it is for millions of dollars while Singapore has 88 billion dollars in reserves. They can pay the amount of money we ask without making a little dent in their budget as they are very rich."

-- BERNAMA

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