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Mahathir-Water

MALAYSIA WILL SUPPLY WATER TO SINGAPORE FOREVER, SAYS DR M

JOHOR BAHRU, Feb 14 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today gave an assurance that Malaysia will forever supply water to Singapore but future supply will be in the treated form.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would continue supplying water to the republic after the expiry of the two water agreements, but it would be treated water.

"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 of the integrated south gateway project and a public housing project here.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had the capability to supply treated water to Singapore in the future because it had learnt and 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 (Newater)," he said.

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 (MGD) from the Pulai 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.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had always regarded Singapore not only as a good friend but also 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 in by certain parties was not the best way to resolve the water issue.

At a press conference later, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had some problems with the Singapore government on several issues, including the overlapping claim to Pulau Batu Puteh and the dispute on a review to the water price.

"But all these problems can be resolved if there is goodwill on both sides," he said.

He said the Johor government currently sold raw water to Melaka at 30 sen per 1,000 gallons, which was far more expensive than the supply to Singapore although Melaka is part of Malaysia.

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

-- BERNAMA

RAM MNY YBY