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NEAC: Asking for fair price is not bullying

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Malaysia, as opposed to the negative image Singapore insists on painting the country abroad, is no big bully when it comes to dealings on the water issue.

How could it be when Malaysia gets next to nothing for the water it supplies to Singapore?

This is the primary question raised in the seventh of a series of eight advertisements which will appear in the New Straits Times tomorrow. (See Page 9)

"Is Malaysia the big bully? Singapore has gone around the world to paint Malaysia as a big bully. Malaysia gets next to nothing for all the water that Singapore takes," the advertisement placed by the National Economic Action Council says.

The advertisement, headlined "Water: The Singapore-Malaysia dispute - The facts", also says that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had promised that Malaysia would never stop water supply to the republic.

Malaysia, it added, would never take advantage of Singapore's need for water and "all we ask for is a fair price".

"Is insisting on a fair price an act of bullying? Is a fair price too much to ask?"

The NEAC had stressed in the last six advertisements, also published in major local dailies, that Malaysia wants a fair price for its water instead of the current price of three sen per 1,000 gallons.

Substantiating its request for a fairer deal, Malaysia disclosed that Singaporeans got all the water they wanted from Malaysia for an entire year for the price of a tiny bite of a Big Mac.

In today's advertisement, the NEAC denied Singapore's allegation that the country was mean and miserly.

Singapore has claimed it was the generous party as it had been selling treated water back to Malaysia for merely 50 sen for every 1,000 gallons.

The republic has also claimed it has been subsidising Malaysia up to RM26.5 million in selling treated water to the country for that price.

It claimed the subsidy was RM1.90 per 1,000 gallons as the actual cost to process every 1,000 gallons of raw water was RM2.40.

In actual fact, Malaysia has been subsidising Singapore 18 times more than what the republic claimed it had been offering.

As for last year alone, Singapore would have had to fork out S\$217.5 million (RM478.4 million) to substitute Malaysian raw water with their NeWater.