

18/07/2003

Water advertisements: Facts are new to many people, says PM

PETALING JAYA, Thurs. - The advertisements on the Malaysia-Singapore water dispute may be seen by the republic as containing old arguments, but Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the facts were new to a lot of people and they should know them.

"It may be old but they should have told us about it. Many people don't know, so it must be new to a lot of people," the Prime Minister was quoted by Bernama as saying at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang on his return from a three-day visit to Ukraine.

Dr Mahathir was asked about a statement by the Singapore Foreign Ministry that the advertisements, put up by the National Economic Action Council (NEAC) in local dailies since Sunday, were old arguments.

Dr Mahathir said the advertisements were to inform people of the facts behind the issue.

"People should know the facts, that's all," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived at 7.30am with his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was greeted by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Transport Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng and other dignitaries.

The water issue between Malaysia and Singapore resurfaced after the republic published a booklet which claims Malaysia does not have the right to negotiate the price of raw water it supplies to the republic, now fixed at three sen per 1,000 gallons.

To counter Singapore's allegations, the NEAC has placed a series of advertisements in major local newspapers explaining why the price should be reviewed.

In the one to be published tomorrow, the NEAC poses a question on whether it is right for Singapore to imply that the republic has been generous and Malaysia has been mean and miserly with regard to the water issue. (See advertisement on Pg 7)

Malaysia and Singapore had signed two water agreements and the price of water sourced from Johor, supplied to the republic, had not been reviewed over the last 40 years.

On the lifting of suspension by MCA on two Penang state assemblymen, the Prime Minister who is also the BN chairman, said the Barisan Nasional supreme council would discuss the matter.

Last week, the MCA presidential council reinstated Tan Cheng Liang (Jawi) and Datuk Keramat's Lim Boo Chang after a sevenmonth suspension.

Last Dec 16, the council "suspended indefinitely" both Lim and Tan after an internal disciplinary inquiry following their move to abstain from voting against an Opposition motion at the State Legislative Assembly.

Their move, to abstain from voting against the motion to postpone the RM1.01 billion Penang Outer Ring Road project, led to criticism from BN component parties as they were deemed to have breached the coalition's code of conduct.