

Water & War with S'pore: Dr M responds
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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad today admitted having persuaded Muhyiddin Yassin during the latter's tenure as Johor menteri besar to supply water to Singapore.

However, he denied that Singapore's former premier Lee Kuan Yew had threatened to go to war if Malaysia did not do so.

"If he had done that, I think I would have stopped any further supply," said the 84-year-old statesman in his blog.

Last week, Muhyiddin, who is now deputy prime minister, touched on this issue when clarifying an allegation that he had sold a piece of Johor land to Singapore when he was menteri besar.

Muhyiddin said the allegation came about because his detractors did not know the actual history that a water treatment plant had existed in the Sungai Lingu area in Bandar Tenggara, Johor.

He said Mahathir had summoned him then to attend a meeting with Lee over gas pipeline and water supply issues in Kuala Lumpur.

He said during the meeting between Mahathir, the then finance minister Daim Zainuddin, Lee and him, Lee had pressed for adequate water supply to the republic from Johor.

"Lee said Singapore was ready to go to war if Malaysia did not want to supply enough water and expressed his regret over the stalled water supply project from Sungai Lingu.

"I said we did not have the money and Lee said Singapore was willing to bear the cost and when completed, the assets will be owned by Malaysia, so Singapore had merely footed the bill," he added.

'Did not pay to be friendly'

Meanwhile, Mahathir said the Malaysian government at that time was trying to be friendly with Singapore in order to solve several problems.

He said although raw water would be supplied at three cent per 1,000 gallons, the understanding was that in future only treated water would be supplied when Malaysian treatment plants would be ready.

"We would also not buy any more treated water from Singapore at 50 cents per thousand gallons when our new treatment plant in Johor is ready.

"When we no longer needed to buy treated water from Singapore we could raise the price of raw water to Singapore without Singapore being able to raise the price of treated water to us," he added.

However, Mahathir said when the water supply agreement was concluded, Singapore raised a lot of issues regarding railway land, the CIQ (Customs, Immigration and Quarantine) at

Tanjong Pagar, training flights by Singapore warplanes over Malaysia and the Central Provident Funds.

"At that stage I realised that being friendly with Singapore did not pay.

"I don't know about the sale of land to Singapore but as it was agreed that a treatment plant be built by Singapore in Johor, land would have to be made available," he added.

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