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A water crisis without Langat 2

ALTERNATIVE NEEDED: Universiti Utara Malaysia's College of Arts and Sciences senior lecturer Dr Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani says there is a need to take action to resolve the water crisis in Selangor and put in place a long-term, viable solution to ensure future water needs

SELANGOR will certainly face a major water crisis if the state government continues to block the construction of the Langat 2 water treatment plant, Universiti Utara Malaysia's College of Arts and Sciences senior lecturer Dr Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani Ahmad Sabri warned yesterday.

He said providing treated water was an important responsibility of the state government and the Langat 2 plant remained the only alternative for the state to ensure adequate supply of treated water, as all existing treatment plants had exceeded their production capacity.

"Without this alternative plan, the people and industries in Selangor will run out of treated water. We have come to the stage where we require an alternative. In the immediate term, Langat 2 is the only solution."

He rubbished the Selangor government's free water policy and called for its review as water is a

precious asset and should not be deemed cheap, let alone free. Following are excerpts of the interview:

Question: Will the Langat 2 plant overcome all water problems in Selangor?

Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani: At the moment,

when we talk about Langat 2 being able to solve our water problems, the answer is yes, because we need treated water. Based on the high current demand, we need Langat 2. But

even this solution is temporary because in the future, even if we have new dams, it's not going to be effective, compared with the most important approach for us to adopt now — educating the people to use water wisely.

If we compare one litre of bottled water and one litre of oil, the price is about the same, so we should appreciate the value of water. But why is it that we can conserve the use of oil and not water?

Question: Does that mean the Selangor government's free water policy is unwise?

Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani: There is nothing free in this world and the water that's given is treated water. Treated water requires cost to produce.

If we give away water for free, then we devalue this vital commodity and no one will value something that's given away for free.

If we increase the water tariff, we will see consumers placing a high value on water in terms of their attitude towards water consumption.

But if we are provided with unlimited water and, worst of all, for free, we will lose that sense of value.

Question: The Selangor government says Langat 2 is not necessary because the ongoing mitigation projects are able to cope with the demand? Is this so?

Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani: The Selangor government only plans things for the short term. It looks at adequate water up to 2014.

Langat 2 is necessary for this period. At present, we might not see water problems as something critical because, everywhere we go, there's water in the taps. But try to imagine the situation five years from now. Will we still have this luxury?

Bernama

"If we give away water for free, then we devalue this vital commodity and no one will value something that's given away for free."

Dr Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani Ahmad Sabri



A long-term solution to Selangor's water woes must be found and implemented, says Dr Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani