



KERATAN AKHBAR

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WATER TARIFFS

'Provide alternative mechanisms'

KLANG: State governments refusing to implement water tariffs need to provide a mechanism to ensure that they do not suffer a water crisis in the near future.

Water, Land and Natural Resources (KATS) Minister Datuk Dr A. Xavier Jayakumar said the ministry would discuss with states such as Negri Sembilan which had declined to raise their water tariffs about alternative mechanisms to ensure no water crisis crops up.

"However, we know which states are in a critical situation now, and if we do not do anything in the next five years, the country will face a water crisis.

"We seek to overcome this through programmes and plans which would be underlined in the 12th Malaysia Plan," he said at a press conference in conjunction with the Restoration, Utilisation and Rehabilitation Programme through Tree Planting at the Taman Bandar Botanik water retention pond, here, yesterday.

Present were Peninsular Malaysia Forestry director-general Datuk Mohd Ridza Awang, Malaysian Forest Research Institute director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod and Klang

Municipal Council deputy president Elya Marini Darmin.

Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar, Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun had reportedly said on Saturday that there would be no water tariff increase in the next five years.

Dr Jayakumar added that most states were agreeable to the federal government's new water tariff implementation.

"Some states have announced that they wanted to table it at their exco for approval.

"However, we will also continue to hold discussions with states which have yet to implement the water tariff. When all the states are in agreement, then the implementation will take place this year."

At the same time, he said that all quarters had to understand that the water industry required a huge budget to ensure the commodity could be supplied nationwide on a 24-hour basis year-round.

"Now we have very low water

reserves in all states, including Selangor, Johor, Penang... To increase the reserves, it involves a lot of capital expenditure" he said.

On the tree planting event, Dr Jayakumar said the ministry was aiming to plant 100 million trees, including Merbau, Keruing Neram, Meranti Melantai, Penaga Lilin, Bungor, Tampoi and Tualang nationwide within the next five years.

"This is part of KATS's efforts to preserve and conserve the country's forests, as well as inculcate a sense of responsibility and love for the environment, and promote national trees such as Merbau.

"Today, 140 trees out of 36 species of forest trees are planted around this area. Almost all the trees were exhibited at our Forest Exhibition between Aug 23 and Sept 22, which was officiated by Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad who declared the Merbau Tree (*Palembanica Intsia*) as a national tree."



Datuk Dr A. Xavier Jayakumar