



## KERATAN AKHBAR

SURAT KHBAR	:	NEW STRAITS TIMES			
TARIKH	:	18/1/2020	MUKA SURAT	:	2
JABATAN	:	SPAN			
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## Managing our water resources

Consider options and be prudent

**M**ALAYSIA is seemingly in a state of paradox when it comes to water. There are 189 river basins, we get an annual rainfall of 3,000mm, which contributes to an annual water resource of some 900 billion cubic metres, and have easy access to seawater.

With such resources, we should not be experiencing water shortages, cuts or rationing. But we are. And it's getting more frequent. For the whole of last year, there have been no less than 10 water disruptions (scheduled and unscheduled). The water cut last October, for instance, which affected 120,000 households in 177 areas in the Klang Valley, lasted 23 hours. The 2014 unscheduled water cuts, which affected some three million consumers from more than 750,000 households in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, was perhaps the most widespread in the country's recent history of water disruptions. Presently, Penang is on high alert after recording critical water levels at its Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams.

The grim truth — Malaysia has a water problem. It may not yet be termed a "major crisis", nevertheless, we could be heading there if we are not careful. Hydrologists have warned that Malaysia would face a water crisis in 2025. They also say Malaysians use and waste too much water. WWF-Malaysia, on

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its website, states 11 issues that Malaysia has to address to ensure sustainability of water resources. Chief among them is the approach of our water supply management which caters largely to demand — the greater the demand the more water needs to be supplied. Water planning, too, does not take into account changes in weather pat-

terns. For example, the 1997/98 El Nino brought severe drought resulting in water shortages. The other problems are pollution, legislation and low water rates. We also do not have a central agency to manage overall aspects of water resources.

Moving forward, Malaysians need to be prudent in their water use. We are lucky so far because supply seems "never ending". Globally, some 800 million people do not have access to clean water. This Leader calls on water authorities to think in terms of water security. Malaysia needs a committed water strategy to manage its water resources more efficiently for the long term. We cannot be too dependent on rivers and dams, because when problems, such as pollution or sabotage occur, millions of people and industries would be without water. Last year's toxic chemical pollution at Sungai Kim Kim in Pasir Gudang (Johor), which disrupted water supply to some 20,000 households, is a case in point.

Authorities may also want to look into stormwater management and rainwater harvesting. Many countries have adopted these as non-potable water sources for washing, laundry, toilet and urinal flushing. Another untapped source is seawater. Malaysia has easy access to the South China Sea and Straits of Malacca. Building desalination plants along the coast may alleviate water stress. Water is the most critical resource issue of this decade. Let's make its conservation a personal responsibility. If we all do our part to be more water conscious and efficient, we can make a difference.