

29 APR 1998

Samy - water

CABINET OKAYS NATIONAL WATER COUNCIL

KUALA LUMPUR, April 29 (Bernama) -- The Cabinet today approved the establishment of a National Water Council which will jointly plan and develop the country's water resources with state governments, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will chair the council whose members would comprise Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers and related ministries.

"Almost all states have agreed to the setting up of the council," Samy Vellu told reporters after opening the annex of the Castlefield national type Tamil primary school in Puchong near here.

"We'll have discussions as soon as possible," he said.

With the council established, it did not mean the federal government would be taking over states' rights over water, he said.

"The federal government is not taking over water rights from any state. But when one state buys water from another, the buyer-state will have to pay. We'll fix the rates and from where water can be taken," he said.

Setting up the council did not involve any amendment to the Federal Constitution, he said.

On the council's inaugural meeting, Samy Vellu said he would find out from the prime minister a suitable date for it.

He said that at the ministry's weekly meeting today he had directed the Public Works Department director-general to prepare a working paper for discussion with menteri besar and chief ministers.

Samy Vellu said the ministries involved would also hold a meeting soon and the outcome would be tabled at the council's inaugural meeting.

The National Water Council will have its office at the Public Works Department headquarters here, he said.

Overall, it would also be tasked with identifying future sites for dams and planning for a national reticulation pipeline network connecting the states, he said.

Responding to a question, the minister denied that the Selangor Water Supply Department had allowed siphoning of water from fire-hydrants.

"I've asked the department to investigate and take action. This is like stealing water. We'll act according to the law," he said.

Samy Vellu said he had received feedback that tanker lorries had siphoned water from fire-hydrants in remote areas and sold them for RM500 to RM1,000.

-- BERNAMA

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