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Samy-Water

STATES AGREE TO HAND OVER WATER MANAGEMENT TO FEDERAL GOVT

KUALA LUMPUR, July 30 (Bernama) -- All states, except Sarawak and Sabah, have agreed in principle to transfer the management of water in their respective states to the federal government, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said today.

He said the menteri besar and chief ministers gave a verbal agreement to allow the management of water to be run by the federal government at the National Water Council meeting chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Putrajaya yesterday.

"The prime minister advised them yesterday that water management should come under the purview of the federal government and they were asked to think about it but they have agreed to the idea," he told reporters after the ministry's post-cabinet meeting here.

Samy Vellu said that although the federal government would like to take over the water management from the states immediately, there were some legal and constitutional implications.

"We first have to get the respective state assemblies to give their approval, followed by the state rulers.

"Then we have to table the necessary amendments to the existing laws and get the approval from the Council of Rulers for us to make the necessary amendments to the federal constitution," he added.

He said all the states, except for Sabah and Sarawak, were represented by their menteri besar, chief ministers or state executive councillors at yesterday's meeting.

Asked how soon the water management would come under the control of the federal government, Samy said: "We can start on the process now and wait for them (the states to do their part).

The Works Minister also said that only four states were making profits from the sale of water and when the federal government took over the management of water, it would also absorb all the debts of the state water agencies.

"When the federal government takes over, then it will be responsible for all water management activities. We will also take over the debts. For states which have signed water concession agreements with the private sector, we will pay damages," he added.

He also said that the government would review "certain projects" initiated by the states to boost their water management system if the plan goes ahead.

On another note, Samy Vellu, who is also the MIC president, said that the party had sent revision books for five subjects to all 14,000 Indian UPSR pupils of Tamil schools in the country.

"The books are free and are our effort to increase the number of students who have gained 7As. Last year, we had 202 students and this year, we target some 600 students to get the best results and we hope these books can help them," he said.

He said the revision books had been sent to all headmasters of Tamil schools nationwide and students should have received them by now.

Samy Vellu said that this was a pilot project by the party and if it was successful the MIC would continue with it.

"Even if we don't reach the target of 600 7A students this year...even if we get 400 we will continue. We don't want any less than this year's figure of 202," he added.

-- BERNAMA  
SR RV JK