

10 FEB 2004

Samy-Water

STATES CAN MANAGE WATER SUPPLY BUT UNDER FEDERAL SUPERVISION

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 10 (Bernama) -- States making profit will be allowed to continue managing their water distribution but under the supervision of the federal government, Works Minister Datuk Seri Samy Vellu said today.

He said that only five to six states were now operating profitably in providing adequate water to consumers.

"Nobody can make profit in time to come. You have to produce water, sell and collect money," he told reporters after launching the 14th Malaysian Skills Competition at his ministry here.

While in states where water management had been privatised, where private companies were involved in handling water distribution, Samy Vellu said they could continue to do so.

"In states where water privatisation is very successful, if it does not provide extra burden to the government and the people, we will allow them to go on rather than take it away. But they will be under the control of the federal government," he said.

Last August, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced that the federal government will take over the management of water resources under state control.

The move is to ensure there are adequate water supply at all times in all states since some states such as Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Kuala Lumpur are troubled with water shortage.

However, the federal government faces difficulties as several water-rich states are reluctant to give up their resources and the issue is a state matter.

Samy Vellu said states like Kelantan continue to face water problems but still refused to surrender their authority to the federal.

"Kelantan and Terengganu have earlier agreed but later they changed their views. I hope they will surrender water management to the federal for the benefit of the people.

"Kelantan is facing a lot of problems and they don't have the allocations to spend and develop new (water) schemes," he said.

The minister also mentioned that aging pipes hindered adequate water supply nationwide.

"To provide a comprehensive water supply to the whole nation, a lot of pipes has to be changed. If we can change all these pipes, we don't have to build water (treatment) plants because the water wastage we have is enough to cover five to 10 years of supply," he said.

The government, he said, would study thoroughly before taking over the administration of water supply, namely the respective states' assets and debts.

Meanwhile, Samy Vellu said that several sectors like the information technology, automobile and heavy technology industries face shortage of skilled workers.

"We have skilled workers but not enough to meet the market demand," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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