

M'sia needs a Water Demand Management plan
Malaysiakini.com
July 05, 2010

Malaysians should acknowledge the good work of our authorities in providing, for the most part, a reliable supply of water in our homes and workplaces. Through the years, as Malaysia developed and demand for treated water grew, this was achieved by putting in place an expanding water supply infrastructure.

This included the building of dams and reservoirs, treatment plants, storage and balancing reservoirs and a distribution network of pipelines. And this approach of ensuring water supply is known as water supply management and is a valid approach in the early phase of a nation's economic development. For that, well done and bravo!

However, at some point it becomes necessary to combine water supply management with water demand management not only to ensure a reliable water supply but also to sustain the multiple benefits of our water resources.

When the carrying capacity (i.e. the maximum number of people that a region's key resource supports) of water is exceeded, ecologically, this signals over-development and, doubly, the need to implement an effective water demand management plan.

In Selangor, this stage was reached some ten years ago. Excessive water withdrawal from Sg. Selangor has decimated the berembang trees along the banks, the synchronously flashing fireflies they attracted and the eco-tourism around them that drew thousands of visitors from around the world.

Water demand management refers to the formal set of measures that a water authority implements with the aim of reducing demand for water. For example, requiring that toilets sold in the market meet a minimum water efficiency standard and doing the same for washing machines – are measures that could be introduced as a part of a comprehensive water demand management plan.

The absence of a water demand management in Malaysia can be compared to having tens of thousands of drivers on roads that have no traffic lights, stop signs, speed limits, speed bumps, and penalties to guide and regulate traffic circulation – but only ads that advise, "Drive carefully".

So, we have our "save water" campaigns and conferences on Water Demand Management, which star the 'synchronously flashing', big water infrastructure contractors and consultants, but whose goal and craft are to ensure there are mega projects for them at regular intervals.

Sure enough, at regular intervals, our decision-makers initiate prohibitively costly mega projects, like the Pahang Selangor Water Transfer Project, which typically eject indigenous people from their traditional lands and in flagrant disregard of our environmental laws, ruin forever some of Mother Nature's priceless gems.

Yes, save our water, please.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/136446>