

It's all about protecting the water, says Awer

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PETALING JAYA: The protection of water catchment areas precedes all else when it comes to preserving water resources and ensuring sufficient water supply amid climate change, according to the Association of Water and Energy Research Malaysia (Awer).

Its president S. Piarapakaran noted that without sufficient water resources, scarcity would be a serious issue.

"The authorities must ensure that dams and their supporting infrastructure are operating at design capacity.

"Lately, we have heard that some dams are drying up due to dry weather. This is an absurd reason as we built this infrastructure to withstand dry weather," he said in

a statement to *The Star* in conjunction with World Environment Day yesterday.

"If a particular infrastructure fails to operate according to its design capacity, there is a need to carry out studies to determine the reason as sustained irregularities in a dam's function is not a normal situation."

Malaysia must also address pollution control, said Piarapakaran, adding that there were newer technologies that could help businesses meet their zero-waste targets.

"We will need a chemical database, collaboration between federal and state agencies as well as improved legislation to meet these targets," he said.

Awer had put forward many suggestions and it was now up to the government to ensure that both new and existing industrial zones

could participate in this effort, he added.

"Awer also encourages cross-industry collaboration as such attempts will save a lot of cost between industries," he said.

The consumption pattern or demand-management was also an important tool to conserve and preserve the nation's precious water resources, he added.

"When we reduce the amount of water used in a particular process, we reduce the amount of wastewater produced," he explained.

Meanwhile, joint billing for water and sewerage had been a National Water Services Industry Restructuring goal for more than a decade, noted Piarapakaran.

The sewerage billing will be made volumetric to ensure that it is fair to consumers.

In this process, centralised sewer-

age operation will be parcelled and merged with state water companies.

"Unfortunately, this process has yet to be completed," he said.

As for businesses, water audits could be carried out to determine the water footprint per unit of products and services, he added.

"This way, industries can be assisted in reducing water consumption to ensure that their access to the premium market is not affected," he said.

He added that such restrictions were already in place for some environmental parameters.

"Agriculture, including monocrop plantation, uses the most water and there is no audited data to determine the exact values.

"That makes this sector one of the main contributors of non-point source pollution," he said.