

Looking at ways to tap underground resources, cut wastage

PORT DICKSON: The government will intensify efforts to better manage the water industry, which includes balancing supply and demand, plugging wastage and sourcing from vast underground resources.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said it was unacceptable for a country like Malaysia, which had 907 billion cubic metres of rainfall a year, to see some states facing water shortages at certain periods of the year.

“This shows that there is something wrong somewhere in the supply-and-demand equation, and in the middle of it, there is also something wrong in the management aspect,” Zahid said at the launch of the national-level World Water Day 2017 here yesterday.

Zahid said the government would look into ways to extract and boost usage of the country’s vast underground water resources, which were largely untapped.

“There are three trillion cubic metres of underground water in the country, of which only 1.5 per cent is utilised.

“If more are extracted, it can help meet the demand of domestic, commercial and industrial users.

“We need to tap underground water as the country is depending too much on rivers and dams,



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar with best thesis award winners at the national-level World Water Day 2017 event in Port Dickson yesterday. PIC BY HAZREEN MOHAMAD

which could be detrimental if we experience long droughts.”

Zahid said Malaysia had the expertise to manage water resources well, as demonstrated by the Malbat (Malaysian battalion) peacekeeping team in Somalia, which served under the United Nations Security Council in 1993.

“The Malaysian army engi-

neers were able to dig 150m into the ground to extract water, and this initiative had helped to minimise deaths in Somalia, which at the time was experiencing 250 deaths daily due to famine and drought.

“If we can help a foreign country extract and manage their water resources, I am sure Malaysia

can do better to solve our own water problems every year.”

He said even though an average of 95 per cent of Malaysians had access to clean water, the government would strive to ensure that 99 per cent of the people would have access to treated water by 2020, from the current 97.2 per cent in urban areas and 93

per cent in rural areas.

Zahid said the states and water industry must set aside their differences and “come out of their cocoons” to help the people.

They have to be prepared to upgrade their water infrastructure as the country progresses to join the ranks of advanced nations, he said.