

# Underground water may not be safe

## Conduct feasibility study first, say experts

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**PETALING JAYA:** Experts have urged the Selangor government to conduct feasibility studies before pumping underground water to overcome the shortage in the state.

Association of Water and Energy Research Malaysia president S. Piarapakaran said the state government has to analyse the chemical content in the water of former mining pools that it plans to pump.

"Have they done analysis on the carcinogenic (cancer-causing) materials there?"

"Abandoned mining pools also have low-level radioactivity," he added when contacted.

Piarapakaran said that minor tapping of groundwater in rural areas would not usually have an adverse impact on the environment. But large-scale projects would need environmental impact assessment.

Piarapakaran also cautioned that tapping underground water could cause land subsidence and drop in groundwater levels.

"This will encourage the people concerned to dig deeper.

"As our groundwater recharge is directly related to rainfall and the amount of forest cover in Malaysia, large-scale projects can have a huge environmental impact," said Piarapakaran.

"Another possible problem is an increase in peat fires during dry seasons as the groundwater levels will be getting lower due to extraction."

Water and Energy Consumer Association of Malaysia secretary general Foon Weng Lian agreed that detailed studies must be done on tapping underground water to

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— FOON WENG LIAN

avoid negative impact to the surrounding environment.

"Where are all the reports and feasibility studies?"

"Use of underground water has to be carefully studied and planned because the impact will be long term," said Foon.

On plans to seek the help of Thailand's "Royal Rainmaking Centre" to harvest rain at the Sungai Selangor dam, both Foon and Piarapakaran said it was a good idea.

"It is better than traditional cloud seeding that we are doing now to increase rainfall in the water catchment areas," said Piarapakaran.

On Wednesday, the Selangor government announced it has approved a RM10mil allocation to build infrastructure to facilitate the transfer of water from sources such as former mines and ponds into Sungai Selangor.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim also announced that water rationing would only be lifted in stages when the water level at the Sungai Selangor dam goes over 40%.

According to the Selangor Water Management Authority website, the level at Sungai Selangor Dam stood at 39.26% as of 8am yesterday.