

Expert: Act on water security issue now

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PETALING JAYA: A water specialist has called on the authorities to immediately address the issue of water security in the country.

Water quality and modelling specialist Dr Zaki Zainudin said that the frequency of water disruption was worrying, especially since it also affects Putrajaya, the administrative capital of the nation.

"There seems to be the same problem every year and steps must be taken to prevent the contamination.

"If our water sources are susceptible to contamination, who is to say they are not susceptible to sabotage?" asked Dr Zaki.

On the recurring problems of contamination at Sungai Semenyih dam, he said the dam was around 50km away from the treatment plant and the river, which passes through the town, was susceptible to contamination from various sources along the way.

He proposed three options, firstly to build protective canals or pipes for the water to stream directly to the Sungai Semenyih Water Treatment Plant from the dam.

The second is to build a treatment plant near the dam and supply the water directly to existing water supply networks which are already protected and the third is to upgrade the treatment plant with advance water treatment technology.

"The first option is very costly as



Treat with care: A file picture of the Sungai Semenyih dam. A water quality specialist says that the frequency of water disruptions is worrying.

that would require the building of 40-50km of pipes, and the third is not recommendable because this would mean the river is allowed to be more polluted and the culprits will go scot-free, so the authorities have to weigh the pros and cons of all the options," he said.

Regarding the water contamination at the treatment plant, Dr Zaki advised those at the plant to test and look beyond conventional contaminants such as ammonia and manganese which have been the usual cause of water disruption.

"My advice is that if the odour of the contaminant is a solvent and has a pungent smell, then maybe they should test for hydrocarbons as they give off a pungent smell," he said.

He added that plant maintenance must also be in tip-top condition and all probable loose ends must be addressed until the source of contamination was identified.

"It may also be worthwhile for the treatment plant to assess and review its own treatment system and processes just to be sure it's not compounding the problem," Dr Zaki said.