

Red alert on water usage

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PETALING JAYA: In conjunction with World Water Day today, the Association of Water and Energy Research Malaysia (Awer) cautions the need for Malaysians to use water more efficiently as groundwater reserves are being heavily affected.

According to Awer president Piarakaparan S., the Malaysian agricultural sector uses around 7.56 billion cubic metres of water annually, while 2.07 billion cubic metres of treated water were consumed by domestic consumers in 2010. One cubic metre is equivalent to 1,000 litres.

He said the food manufacturing process is water-intensive, both in agriculture and the manufacturing of consumer goods.

“We use 140 litres of water to produce one cup of coffee, 184 litres for a kilogramme of tomatoes and 1,000 litres to produce a litre of cow’s milk,” he said, adding that this water footprint was imported or exported along with food imports and exports.

Piarakaparan said that agricultural use amounted to 62% of Malaysia’s total water use and that recent droughts indicated that Malaysian groundwater reserves are being heavily affected.

“This only proves we need to better manage surface water resources and minimise the impact of water usage for agricultural activities to water stress,” he said, calling for effective measures such as the drip method to irrigate the roots of crops.

“Studies have proven that such methods have reduced water usage significantly and increased yields substantially. A revolution in agriculture is a must. The discharge of waste water from small and large scale agriculture must be monitored and regulated.”

Piarakaparan said that increases in agricultural activities would only increase pollution and contamination of groundwater and surface water reserves, and that waste water re-use was a good system to put in place, along with the use of natural fertilisers.