Mine water pumped into S’gordam contains harmful heavy metal ions

KUALA LUMPUR: Three water researchers have urged the Selangor government to disclose the status and safety of mine water pumped into the Sungai Selangor dam for public consumption as it is found to contain heavy metal ions.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) head of Centre of Water Research and Analysis Prof Dr Yang Farina Abdul Aziz said the matter should be looked into seriously as the water content could endanger public health.

She said although the Selangor Water Management Authority (Luas) had attested that the water was safe for public consumption as it had been treated, the status ought to be certified safe by the Health Ministry.

"Mine water normally contains heavy metal ions. So, as a consumer I want people to know whether the water that I get is safe for consumption.

"In order to determining whether the mine water is safe or not, it should be analysed by the Chemistry Department or the Health Ministry and we cannot take Luas word for it," she said recently.

On Monday, Selangor Youth, Sports, Infrastructure and Public Amenities Committee chairman Dr Ahmad Yunus Hairi contended that mine water pumped to fill up the Sungai Selangor dam during the recent water crisis was tested safe and free of bacteria and chemical content parameters set by the State Health Department.

Yang Farina said the filtering treatment and technology employed at water treatment plants were not capable of separating metal ions from mine water as it was only suitable for ordinary water resources.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia director of Institute of Environmental and Water Resource Management Prof Dr Abdull Rahim Mohd Yusoff said water containing heavy ions was not only detrimental to health, but could be fatal if it was consumed a long period.

He said if the water contained harmful heavy metal ions such as lead or arsenic above 0.01 milligrams, it could cause blood and bone cancers as well as other side effects such as impaired organ (including liver and kidneys) and nervous system functions.

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Faculty of Environmental Studies lecturer Dr Mohd Yusoff Ishak said fish caught in old mining pools contained heavy metal ions such as lead and cadmium which could cause chronic poisoning to those who consume them.

"In 2001, I made a study on old mining pools in Batu Caves and the results were shocking as the water contained metal ions such as lead and cadmium.

"Those who eat the fish over a long period can suffer internal organ damage," he said, adding that the Selangor government should conduct a study on physical and chemistry properties of the water, and the density of heavy metal ions for the perusal of experts before pumping it into the dam. – Bernama