Let's ensure we do not get into troubled waters soon

TODAY, parts of our country are enveloped by the haze, a perennial problem that invites the usual comments.

And the problem is compounded by the fact that demand for more water in the current dry spell could lead to shortages in certain areas.

While the haze problem may be beyond our control, especially if they cross geographical and international boundaries, a country blessed with so much water resources should not have to deal with water shortage issues, whether now or in the future.

But the ongoing debate over water proves otherwise.

Because water is a state resource, and states have their own policies with regard to supply and management, it is virtually impossible to come to a common ground, more so when politics is a partisan player in the equation.

Stripped of the political rhetoric, there are a number of key issues that need to be addressed.

Our water management system depends heavily on the water supply management approach to cater to demand.

This approach, as reliable studies have shown, is unsustainable in the long run as water demand will eventually overtake water supply.

The ongoing wrangle between Selangor and Putrajaya over the building of the Langat 2 Water Treatment Plant is a case in point.

The politicians may weigh in with their own statistics and arguments over raw and treated water, but to the ordinary consumer, it is simply incredulous that we even have to worry about the big impending water crisis.

But consumers, too, have an important role to play because we have an extremely high rate of water wastage in all areas including domestic, agriculture and industrial.

Currently, Malaysians use an average of 226 litres of water daily, way above our neighbours in the region.

Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Seri Peter Chin Fah Kui had said 70% of Malaysians use more than the recommended daily limit for Malaysians is 165 litres per person.

The harsh reality is that the average Malaysian uses 25% more water than is recommended by the United Nations.

And even before the treated water reaches us, we already have one of the highest rates of non-revenue water, with the national average being 40%. This equals a loss of 40 litres out of every 100 litres of treated water.

These are the real issues that need to be addressed.

Yes, water should not be policed at the expense of the people.

But the people must also understand that demand increases because of their unquenchable thirst for unlimited and cheap supply.

And if the demand is not slowed down through more sustainable use of our precious resource, we can expect a real crisis to hit us eventually.

Let us be clear that everything is connected. We are but mere trustees of what God has blessed us with. It is time we make ourselves worthy of the task at hand.