

# Urgent need to address UMS water supply crisis

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**KOTA KINABALU:** The National Consumer Foundation Malaysia (Sabah Chapter) expresses serious concern over the ongoing water supply disruption at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) – a prestigious higher education institution that hosts thousands of local and international students.

Despite promises of reform since the state government took over water management, the problem remains unresolved. This prolonged crisis reflects poorly on the state's ability to provide basic utilities to vital institutions, said its chairman, David Chan.

"We urge the Sabah government to explain clearly why this matter has not been resolved and to take immediate corrective measures. Students have reportedly been left in limbo, with some even lodging complaints to the Premier of Sarawak – a sign of growing frustration and desperation," he said in a statement on



David Chan

Wednesday.

Chan said it should not be technically difficult to ensure water reaches the campus. Authorities should consider increasing water tanker deliveries, enhancing pump pressure and flow, and – if supply remains insufficient – drilling for underground water and installing mobile filtration systems to ensure clean, safe water is available.

"UMS is a national asset. Leaving students without adequate water supply not only undermines the university's

credibility but also affects Sabah's image as a destination for international education.

"We urge the government to act without delay and provide a clear roadmap to solve this issue. The welfare and dignity of our students must not be compromised," said Chan.

Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg has pledged to bring the issue of prolonged water supply disruptions at UMS to the attention of Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir.

While acknowledging the gravity of the complaints raised in an open letter by a Sarawakian student, the Premier said he was unable to take direct action as the matter falls outside his jurisdiction.

The student, 21-year-old Muhammad Rasul Rozmiezian from Kuching, had written to the Premier on May 23, detailing the challenges faced by students at the university – from

inconsistent water supply to the lack of urgency shown by campus authorities in resolving the issue.

The second-year sociology student described a routine marked by dry taps, rationed buckets, and missed showers, sometimes for days on end.

"It's been like this for a while. Sometimes we don't get water for two or three days straight," he wrote. "We fill up whatever containers we have and try to make it last. There's only so much we can do."

In his letter, Rasul appealed not only on behalf of the nearly 1,000 Sarawakian students at UMS but also their Sabahan peers, stressing that the water crisis cuts across state lines and should not be dismissed as a localised problem.

"We're far from home. We don't have family here. We're trying to be strong. But the truth is, this problem affects everyone – not just Sarawakians," he said.

Meanwhile, Sabah Umno

strategic communications director Datu Rosman Datu Ahir Zaman said the involvement of Sarawak Premier in the water crisis at UMS is an embarrassing reflection of the Sabah government's failure to address basic infrastructure issues.

Rosman called it a "tamparan besar" (major blow) to the credibility of the Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) administration – even if Abang Johari only unofficially raised the issue with the Higher Education Ministry.

"This issue clearly falls under the Sabah government. Yet, it is the Sarawak Premier who is helping to voice the concerns of Sabahans, including students from Sarawak," Rosman said in a statement on Wednesday.

Rosman said the situation had reached a point where students at Sabah's premier university were struggling not for academic excellence but for basic clean water.

He criticised the state

government's repeated statements and temporary measures, calling for a strategic, long-term solution.

"What has the Sabah government done beyond issuing statements? The students are still suffering, and there's been no effective action," he said.

Rosman stressed that Sabah's water supply issues are not new, with long-standing problems remaining unresolved for years.

"The failure to ensure water access even for a key institution like UMS shows how little has been done to address the people's most basic needs," he said.

He warned that the intervention by a leader from another state should serve as a wake-up call for Sabah's government.

"If Sabah leaders continue to fail their people, don't be surprised when leaders from other states step up to become the voice of Sabahans," he said.