



Unit Komunikasi Korporat

KERATAN AKHBAR

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NEW STRAITS TIMES
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DANGEROUSLY UNSECURED

WHY?

IT'S happened again. 1.5 million go without water supply after industrial waste is dumped into sewage manholes.

>> REPORTS BY **TEOH PEI YING** AND **TEH ATHIRA YUSOF** ON PAGES 2 & 3

PIC BY AZHAR RAMLI



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NEWS / *Story of the day*

WATER DISRUPTION

'IT'S TIME TO GET SERIOUS'

Authorities should have taken better preventive measures, says expert

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WITH three contamination cases having struck water treatment plants in the Klang Valley this year, questions have been raised over whether adequate security measures are in place to protect the country's water sources.

Experts and environmentalists believe that answers, and especially action, are needed to curb any more of such cases, which are preventable.

Water quality expert Dr Praveena Nair said the public must be educated on the importance of not disposing any waste into the river.

She said there still existed the misguided perception that anything liquid-based dumped into rivers would automatically be treated.

The public must be made aware that there was a difference between waste water treatment plants and sewage treatment plants.

Praveena underscored the importance of implementing the integrated water billing system in more states — introduced by the Water, Land and Natural Resources Ministry — as a key move to educating the public on the issue.

On Dec 20, Terengganu became

the first state in Peninsular Malaysia to implement the integrated water billing system with IWK for premises using connected sewerage service.

"This is not the first time that illegal dumping has affected Sungai Semenyih or any other rivers."

The illegal dumping of chemicals, which affected the Sungai Semenyih water treatment plant on Saturday, left 1.5 million people in several districts without water supply as the plant operations had to be shut down to ensure safety.

The National Water Services Commission (SPAN) yesterday confirmed that the illegal toxic disposal into the Indah Water Konsortium (IWK) sewage manhole at Bandar Bukit Mahkota was the cause of the odour pollution.

Praveena said SPAN and the Department of Environment should by right have a record of all chemical components from the companies that carry pollutants.

"If this is done, culprits will be less inclined to carry out such acts as they know the authorities would be able to track their activities," she said.

A water and sewerage industry expert, who wanted to remain anonymous, said the authorities should have taken better preventive measures.

"The authorities have pinpointed the location of the pollution to sewage manholes in Bandar Bukit Mahkota.

"These could have been sealed a long time ago, cutting off a potential outlet for unscrupulous parties to pollute. This should have been thought of well before.

"While it is fine and well to act



now and seal them, it's akin to locking the stable after the horses have bolted," said the expert.

Dr Zaki Zainudin, a water quality and modelling specialist, said it was disturbing to note that water disruptions due to pollution continued to plague consumers in Malaysia.

"What is even more disturbing is that this is not the first time it has happened in Sungai Semenyih," he said.

He said the authorities had previously mooted the idea of tapping water from the Putrajaya Lake for the Semenyih water treatment plant as a contingency plan during emergencies of this nature.

"Maybe it's time for the government to revive that idea," he said.

He suggested that effluent from sewage and waste water treatment plants be released to an effluent holding tank (EHT) before being channelled into the river.

"This EHT must come with continuous and online real-time data transmission. This way, any



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USJ 12 residents getting their water supply at the main pipe in USJ 3A, Subang Jaya, yesterday. PIC BY ROHANIS SHUKRI

failures or anomalies can be contained.

"Priority should be given to plants upstream of intakes, especially critical ones. It is imperative that such disruptions be avoided as consumer patience is wearing thin, even more so in view of the rise in water tariffs next year," he said.

Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia vice-president Randolph Jeremiah said it was important to find the culprits and impose severe fines and punishment as a deterrent.

"Monitoring and enforcement can be difficult due to the size of water catchment areas. However, we have adequate laws.

"It must be used to the full extent for such crimes. It's time to get serious with zero tolerance for any individuals and parties responsible," he said.

Page 1 pic: Industrial waste was dumped into this sewage manhole at Bandar Bukit Mahkota in Bangi.



Air Selangor water technician Muhammad Tarmizi Abdullah checking a water sample from Sungai Semenyih in Bukit Mahkota, Bangi, during the last plant shutdown in September. FILE PIC

"This is not the first time. The last disruption was just a few months ago. How often do the authorities want us to go through this?"

Peter Pook, who is a Subang Jaya Municipal Council Zone 3 residential committee member, said 30 of his relatives from the northern states and Singapore had come to his house to celebrate Winter Solstice.

"It's sad. Without water, we can

no longer celebrate it at my house. My mother, who came from Taiping, was shocked to find there was no water."

He said the committee was arranging water supply to the affected areas through water tankers.

Aida Johan, 33, said she was also upset that no prior notice was issued about the water disruption.

The USJ 12 resident said she had checked Air Selangor's web-

site and called its hotline, but no one answered.

"The website notified us of the water disruption only at 5pm. Earlier, it listed Hulu Langat only, not USJ.

"It was already late and we could not store water."

She hoped the authorities would notify residents earlier and carry out better enforcement. As at 4pm yesterday, USJ residents were seen getting their water supply from the main water pipe in USJ 3A.

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Selangor Environment, Green Technology and Consumer Affairs Executive Committee chairman Hee Loy Sian (left) speaking at a press conference in Bandar Bukit Mahkota yesterday. PIC BY AZHAR RAMLI

IWK to seal 20 sewage manholes, says exco rep

KUALA LUMPUR: Taps ran dry for 1.5 million people here on Saturday due to an unscheduled major water supply disruption.

Residents in Hulu Langat, Sepang, Putrajaya, Petaling Jaya and Kuala Langat were caught by surprise.

The disruption was caused by odour pollution at the Sungai Semenyih water treatment plant. It was the third such incident in less than six months.

The National Water Services Commission (SPAN) yesterday said the dumping of industrial waste into Indah Water Konsortium's (IWK) manholes in Bandar Bukit Mahkota was the cause of the odour pollution.

Selangor Environment, Green Technology and Consumer Affairs Committee chairman Hee Loy Sian said 20 IWK sewage manholes in the area would be sealed to prevent a recurrence.

"This is a remote area with a small number of houses.

"I have instructed the Kajang Municipal Council and IWK to guard the entrance so we can monitor those entering and leaving the area.

"We have asked the police to conduct patrols to stop irresponsible parties from dumping chemical waste into the manholes," he said at IWK's facility in Bandar Bukit Mahkota yesterday.

He said closed-circuit television cameras would also be installed.

He said three pollution cases had hit water treatment plants this year — one at the Batang Kali plant and two at the Sungai Semenyih plant.

In July, more than one million people in Selangor and here were hit by water disruptions following odour pollution at the treatment plants.

In the incident, oil-based waste was found in the inlet of the IWK treatment plant in Batang Kali, which led to a complete shut-

down of the Sungai Selangor Phases 1, 2 and 3 water treatment plants, as well as the Rantau Panjang plant downstream.

In September, odour pollution was detected at the Sungai Semenyih water treatment plant, forcing it to cease operations for 13 hours, affecting more than 370,000 households in Petaling, Hulu Langat, Kuala Langat and Sepang.

Stressing that IWK had followed standard operating procedures set by the Environment Department, Hee said IWK was a victim in this incident.

"Following the incident, discharge from IWK, which occurs every 30 minutes into Sungai Semenyih, will be tested as the river is a main source of water for the people.

"We have proposed to the Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Ministry that the water quality be assessed by its odour to detect sewage disposal."

Hee said the pollutants had been identified as a solvent mixed with oil, a type of industrial waste.

"The sample has been sent to the Chemistry Department. It will take a week to analyse the sample and determine what the chemicals are."

Hee was, however, unable to offer an estimate on when water supply would resume.

"We need to ensure that the pollution is cleared before the Semenyih plant can resume its operations."

Air Selangor Sdn Bhd, in a statement, said the Sungai Semenyih and Bukit Tampoi water treatment plants would remain closed until further notice.

"Air Selangor, together with IWK and other related agencies such as Lembaga Urus Air Selangor (Luas), is carrying out cleaning work.



NSTV