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## Vigilance to stop river polluters

Multi-agency team keeps round-the-clock watch at water treatment plants too

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THERE will be round-the-clock surveillance from now until Jan 31 at the Sungai Langat and Sungai Selangor river basins to ensure the waterways are free from pollution. Selangor environment, green technology, science, technology and innovation and consumer affairs committee chairman Hee Loy Sian said the move was to prevent unscheduled water cuts due to river pollution, in light of Chinese New Year celebrations next week-end.

"We will station 200 officers from various departments to monitor the river basins and ensure there is no pollution that could cause sudden supply disruption this festive season," he said in a press conference at the state secretariat.

This type of operation, he said, would also be carried out for future festive seasons this year such as Hari Raya, Deepavali and Christmas.

There will be two shifts — first

from 10am to 10pm and the second from 10pm to 10am — comprising officers from multiple agencies namely Indah Water Konsortium Sdn Bhd (IWK), Selangor Department of Environment (DOE), Selangor Water Management Board (LUAS), Air Selangor, National Water Services Commission (SPAN), Selangor Drainage and Irrigation Department, the land office, local councils, state Road Transport Department (JPJ) and the police.

"We will monitor all aspects, and drones will be mobilised to cover a wider area.

"We also hope the public who spot or see someone polluting any of the rivers, will inform us immediately so that action can be taken," he said.

He added that LUAS would be heading the surveillance operation and would be the one coordinating the entire team.

Meanwhile, IWK has already been tasked to focus on monitoring its sewage treatment plants and to ensure all treatment plants located upstream are well guarded.



Hee (third from right) with representatives from Air Selangor, LUAS, IWK, Selangor DOE and DID discussing the surveillance operation to prevent pollution at Sungai Langat and Sungai Selangor. — AZLINA ABDULLAH/The Star

Two local councils — Kajang Municipal Council and Hulu Selangor District Council — along with Selangor DOE will keep a close watch on all licensed premises operating by the rivers.

"The most recent water cut during Christmas last year had affected many residents, so we hope such incidents will not recur, especially during festive seasons," said Hee.

He said the authorities were focused on Sungai Selangor and Sungai Langat because the first one channelled water to 60% of the population of Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya while the latter supplied to 30% of the population.

"Together, these two rivers cover 90% of the Klang Valley population and if there is a water cut, it will affect a huge majority of the people," he said.

Apart from those two rivers, he said the team would also monitor Sungai Klang, which contributed to the remaining 10% of the population in Klang Valley, as a precautionary measure.

The surveillance teams will also

be vigilant at water treatment plants and the dams.

Hee said the various departments carried out regular operations and checks and not just during the festive seasons.

From the last quarter of 2019 to-date, two incidents were detected by LUAS while many premises operating along the river were checked by Selangor DOE.

The first incident was detected on Dec 30, where officers from LUAS spotted foam coming out from an IWK manhole at Bukit Sentosa near Sungai Selangor.

This was caused by industrial waste and was detected and stopped in time.

The second was detected on Jan 9 where plantation waste was found about 2km from Sungai Semenyih and was also stopped in time so no water treatment plants needed to shut down.

During previous daily checks, IWK also identified 12 unlicensed lorries transporting sewage and chemical waste to be dumped into manholes.

"There have been reports of

many unlicensed trucks collecting and disposing wastes irresponsibly. I hope SPAN and JPJ will take immediate action," said Hee.

According to Selangor DOE, its officers have checked 139 premises in Bukit Mahkota Bangi, Nilai, Kajang and Hulu Selangor as of the last quarter of 2019.

Of those, 22 notices and 45 compounds were issued.

"We are treating the matter very seriously and we will not hesitate to take legal action against those found responsible for polluting rivers and manholes with chemical waste," said Hee.

He said those responsible for the previous incidents were sued and brought to court.

If found guilty, the maximum penalty is five years jail or a fine of RM500,000 or both.

"We urge the public to lodge reports either with LUAS or DOE if they see illegal activities that will harm the environment. So be our eyes and ears," added Hee.

DOE's 24-hour hotline is 1-800-88-2727 while LUAS can be reached at 019-264 7904.

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