

LEMBAGA URUS AIR SELANGOR
(UNIT KORPORAT)

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More bite to check polluters

A joint task force comprising a ministry and four agencies will ensure that action against environmental polluters will be carried out more swiftly and efficiently. Various groups have welcomed the move, and are urging the authorities to step up their efforts by imposing stiffer punishments against the wrongdoers and expanding the powers of the task force. See page 5 for reports by MAZWIN NIK ANIS and MARTIN CARVALHO

Sungai Gong, Rawang

Sungai Selangor, Bestari Jaya

Sungai Kim Kim, Pasir Gudang

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Environmental criminals beware

Dedicated task force targeting polluters set to swing into action

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS
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PUTRAJAYA: Efforts to investigate and solve environmental-related crimes will be given a boost with the formation of a dedicated task force to expedite swift action against perpetrators who pollute the environment.

The task force will be in operation as early as October as the government shows its seriousness to act against environmental perpetrators.

At the same time, police will be given the authority to take immediate action towards environmental criminals.

In announcing the setting up of the special task force, Environment and Water Resources Minister Datuk Seri Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man

said the unit would boost speed and effectiveness in the action by the relevant authorities against those who commit crimes against the environment.

"The setting up of the task force will help with enforcement against polluters.

"This, along with amendments to the Environmental Quality Act, will ensure that those who commit crimes against the environment will pay dearly," he told a press conference to announce the setting up of the special task force.

The task force will comprise the Department of Environment (DOE), Water Services Commission (SPAN), Biosafety Department and the police.

Tuan Ibrahim said the task force would allow for better and faster enforcement with the support and

expertise from the authorities involved, particularly in the areas of logistics, forensics and intelligence, as well as law and enforcement.

Tuan Ibrahim said police would now be given the power to act – using the Environmental Quality Act and Water Services Industry Act – against offenders. Currently, police have been empowered to take action using the Biosafety Act.

He said the task force is one of the many solutions in dealing with pollution incidents, which must be tackled holistically and in a proactive manner.

He pointed to the Sungai Gong incident as an example of how pollution affects environmental sustainability, the economy as well as the people's health and well-being.

Globally, crime against the envi-

ronment is the fourth highest organised crime after drugs, money laundering and human trafficking.

Tuan Ibrahim said the ministry would discuss with the Public Service Department and the Finance Ministry on additional staff and allocation.

He also said that amendments to the Environmental Quality Act, which will see stiffer penalties against environmental offenders, would be tabled at the next Parliament meeting.

"We are seeking higher compounds and fines and for those who caused pollution to clean up and bear the cost," he said.

However, Tuan Ibrahim declined to reveal the proposed amount of compound and fines to be issued to the polluters.

On the recent Sungai Gong water

pollution incident in Rawang, the minister said that investigation papers had been submitted to the Attorney General's Chambers.

"The investigation papers by the Department of Environment and by the Water Services Commission were sent last week."

Tuan Ibrahim said that under Section 43 of the Environment Quality Act, action could be taken not just on the company that caused pollution.

"We can also charge and take action against the company director, chief executive officer, manager and other officers for the crime," he said.

Watch the video
thestartv.com



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