

Polluters in their midst

Residents say factories dotting the banks of Sungai Semenyih are the cause of the river's contamination problem



Heavy vehicles crossing a bridge over Sungai Semenyih to an industrial area located near the river.

— Photos: ELAN PERUMAL, RICKY LAI and M. AZHAR ARIF/ The Star

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SUNGAI Semenyih which has become the subject of controversy due to frequent water contamination incidents lately has close to 50 industrial sites operating on both sides of the river.

The water of Sungai Semenyih has been contaminated far too often as it affects the water supply of thousands of households in USJ, Puchong, Semenyih, Kajang, Serdang, Seri Kembangan, Putrajaya, Cyberjaya and neighbouring areas.

A check by *StarMetro* along Sungai Semenyih, especially along the Sungai Lalang stretch, found the presence of a large number of factories, yards, sawmills, chemical plants operating by the river.

There were at least 50 commercial or industrial lots located along the 15km stretch of Jalan Sungai Lalang from Semenyih town to Kampung Sungai Lalang, Kampung Pasir and ending at the Semenyih Dam.

Not far from Sungai Semenyih is an industrial area located at Jalan Villajaya 3 known as the High Tech Industrial Area.

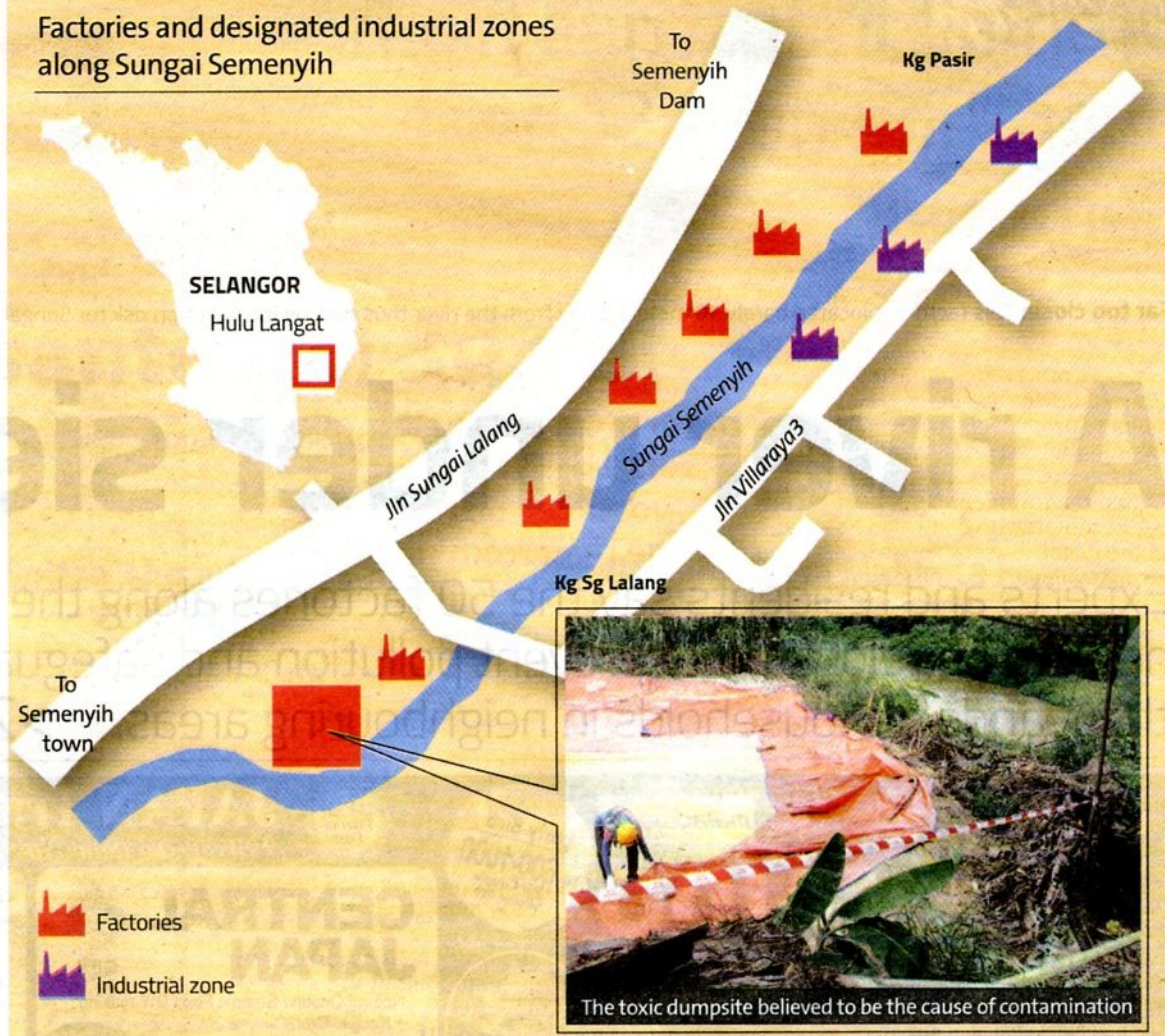
A villager said the authorities should not have allowed the factories and plants to operate so close to the river.

"Last month, we had a case in which a recycling centre that was operating along the Jalan Sungai Lalang was caught dumping industrial waste into the river which led to the contamination of the river.

"The people of Semenyih are directly affected as when the river is contaminated, the authorities have no choice but to shut down the water treatment plant and water supply to our area will be cut indefinitely," said the villager who wanted to be known only as Atan.

Sundry shop owner Rubiah

Factories and designated industrial zones along Sungai Semenyih



Omar, 65, from Kampung Pasir said the authorities should act swiftly against the perpetrators to prevent the repeat of the river getting contaminated.

She added that villagers had stopped bathing in the river due to its high level of pollution.

A former Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) librarian Arif Alias, 65, said the river had lost its life as there were hardly any fish in it.

He said the locals used to catch fish and prawns from the river many years ago but this was not possible now due to the high contamination.

Arif said the Kajang District Council, Hulu Langat District Office, Drainage and Irrigation Department, Department of Environment, the state and federal governments must work together to ensure Sungai Semenyih is not sub-

jected to further contamination.

"They have to put aside their political differences and work towards protecting the river which provides water to thousands of households.

"They have to work together for a common interest, carry out effective surveillance to prevent dumping of waste into the river and mete out tougher punishment against the culprits," he said.