

River constantly under threat

Sungai Semenyih is still in peril of being polluted as factories are releasing effluent into it

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INDUSTRIES and unscrupulous individuals are taking advantage of the lack of enforcement along Sungai Semenyih to pollute the river, including discharging effluent into the water.

Despite a series of recent incidents of water contamination at Sungai Semenyih which resulted in the shutting down of the water treatment plant affecting millions of households in Selangor, a *StarMetro* team's recent visit to the area revealed that the river continued to be the target of polluters.

They also were illegally extracting water from the river.

Besides that, the check also revealed that contractors have found the riverbank along Jalan Sungai Lalang as an easy target to conduct illegal dumping.

Global Environment Centre (GCE) river care coordinator Dr Kalithasan Kailasam, who was present with the team, expressed disbelief with what was uncovered during the check.

He said it was strange to find a factory openly discharging waste water from its premises into Sungai Semenyih located just across the road.



A view of the pipe inside the river for collecting water. It is unknown whether they have approval from authorities.

"The factory is channelling its waste into the drain outside its premises via a pipeline that goes to the river beneath the surface of the road," said the river expert, puzzled that such an action had escaped the authorities.

Dr Kalithasan said he was unsure if the factory had the approval of the Kajang Municipal Council (MPKJ) to do so.

He said his observation revealed

that the factory was manufacturing chemical products and it was unwise for it to be allowed to channel waste water into the river.

"I think it is not a good idea to allow the effluent to be released into the river without being properly treated," he said.

Besides that, Dr Kalithasan was also shocked to find out that the same factory was extracting water from the river for its use.

According to his finding, he said, the factory had set up a small pump house inside a wooden structure nearby to extract the river water.

"Besides the wooden structure, we also found a well believed to be used to store the extracted river water," he said, calling for action to be taken against the operator.

Further checks around the area also revealed that garbage had been illegally dumped along the riverbank facing the industrial zone.

At most spots, Dr Kalithasan said the garbage was dumped about five meters from the river.

He said both industrial and domestic wastes were illegally dumped which could contaminate the river.

"This should not be allowed to happen as the rubbish from the riverbank will be washed into the river whenever it rains," he said.

Dr Kalithasan, who visited the site for the first time, was disappointed with the condition of the Sungai Semenyih along the Jalan Sungai Lalang stretch.

He said, the authorities were not doing enough to protect the river from pollution.

"My findings revealed that the river is under huge threat especially from the industries that are operating too close to the riverbank," he said.

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A concrete well believed to be used to collect water from Sungai Semenyih.

He added that the council, Department of Environment (DOE), Lembaga Urus Air Selangor (LUAS), Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) and other relevant agencies must get their act together if they were serious in their move to prevent the river from being polluted.

"Currently, the situation is unsatisfactory and we should act before it leads to another water contamination incident," he said, adding that it also caused the government a lot of money on water treatment.

When contacted, Selangor environment committee chairman Elizabeth Wong said it was an offence to extract raw water from the river without the approval of the authorities.

She added that LUAS was responsible to give approval for extracting water from the river.

"However, those who are allowed to extract water from the river will be charged for the usage of the water based on the industries they are involved in," she said, adding that the rubber industry used river water.

Wong added that factories were not allowed to discharge effluent to the river unless they had the prior approval of the DOE.

Under DOE regulation, she said, the effluent must be treated by the factory's own treatment plant

Any business which produces effluent above the set parameters must have its own treatment facilities within its own compound.

Elizabeth Wong

before they were channelled to the river.

"Any business which produces effluent above the set parameters must have its own treatment facilities within its own compound," she said, adding that it must be done within set parameters outlined under the schedule of the Environment Quality Act 1974.

Wong also said that the views of MPKJ would be taken into consideration before such approvals are granted to the factories.

"The local authorities and the relevant agencies will sit on a panel that grants such approvals," she said.

At press time, MPKJ has yet to respond to the matter