

End to the flow

The Negri Sembilan government will phase out the Sg Linggi water treatment plant because of high operational costs and pollution. ➤3



Highly polluted

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- By CHITRA S. NATHAN / THE STAR

Sg Linggi shutdown

Negri to phase out water treatment plant

By **CHITRA S. NATHAN**

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THE Negri Sembilan government plans to shut down the Sg Linggi water treatment plant — which is one of the main water sources in Seremban — due to its high operational cost.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said the move was also necessary as the water drawn from the river was highly polluted.

He said RM342mil would be spent to upgrade facilities including building new water treatment plants to reduce dependence on the Sg Linggi plant.

The Sg Linggi plant supplies 113.6mil litres of treated water daily to consumers in several districts.

The funds allocated by the federal government through the Water Asset Management Company would be used for the building and upgrading treatment plants, retention ponds, replacing water pipes, waste (sludge) management and on programmes to reduce non-revenue water (NRW).

"The Sg Linggi plant is one of the oldest and uses a system which is no longer cost-efficient to run. It consumes a lot of electricity and the operating cost is high.

"In addition, the water that flows from Sg Linggi is dirty and polluted as there are several slaughterhouses upstream which affects the quality of water and for Muslims, the water may not be considered pure," he said.

Mohamad said the corporatisation of the state water supply department which is now known as Syarikat Air Negri Sembilan (Sains), was to improve facilities and services which would also include phasing out the Sg Linggi plant.

"If we build another water treatment plant in Sawah Raja, it will be enough to meet the daily needs of consumers and we will no longer need to rely on the Sg Linggi plant," he said.

He added that water consumption in the Rembau and Port Dickson districts alone was about 70mil litres daily and the new Sawah Raja treatment plant would be able to supply at least 70% of the daily requirements.

Additional and improved infrastructure would also mean the state would not be badly affected by water shortages during dry spells as was the case in 2006 when it was



Big factor: Sand-mining activities both legal and illegal along the Sg Linggi river has also contributed to the deterioration of the river's water quality.

forced to buy water from neighbouring states.

"If we had the infrastructure then, we would not have been so badly affected and we applied for the allocation to ensure that there will never be a recurrence of such an incident," said Mohamad.

He said Sains was also laying new pipes and replacing older ones in stages in the state.

"You hear about burst pipes all the time and this is because some of the asbestos cement pipes are almost four decades old and are no longer suitable.

"We are slowly replacing them with newer and safer mild steel pipes," he said.

Mohamad said water leakages due to burst pipes was also a contributing factor to the state having among the highest percentages of NRW in the country.

NRW is water that has been produced but "lost" before it reaches consumers and in 2009 the state's NRW was at a staggering 52%.

"Leaks and water theft are among the reasons

we incur losses and we are taking measures to reduce these incidences.

"With constant monitoring and enforcement, last year our NRW was reduced to 44% but it is still high and we are working to reduce it further," he said.

Responding to complaints by the public that their water bills were much higher since the corporatisation, Mohamad said there was no truth in the claims as the state maintained one of the lowest water tariffs in the country.

"With the new meters, there can be no hanky-panky as the meter readers cannot just sit in a coffee-shop and *teropong* (use binoculars) to estimate bills. This may have been the case in the past but not anymore.

"I have also heard of *pakcik* and *makcik* complaining that the new meters move too fast and are registering wrong readings when actually it is just because the older meters had different configurations," he said in jest.