

Deep trouble looms

- 13 incidents of water treatment plants being shut down as at April due to high level of contaminants in the rivers
- Water reserve margin from 34 plants only at 2 per cent, way below the minimum safe level of 20 per cent

RIVERS POLLUTED: Selangor's water crisis worsens as report says rivers are highly contaminated

HARIZ MOHD
KUALA LUMPUR
harizm@nst.com.my

THE imminent water shortage in the Klang Valley is now further compounded with pollution in the main rivers in Selangor, particularly the Semenyih and Langat rivers.

Up to April this year, there have been at least 13 incidents where water treatment plants had to be shut down for several hours

due to the high level of contaminants in the water.

In addition, seven water treatment plants in Selangor now have water reserves of only two per cent.

When raw water from the rivers is polluted, the water treatment plants cannot operate effectively. Pollution can also lead to low water reserves.

EXCLUSIVE

→ Turn to Page 8

Pic by Mohd Fadli Hamzah

Look out for these icons



NST digital edition

for a more exciting and interactive experience

Visit subscription.nstp.com.my for more details

Plant disruption can occur when pollution is severe

→ *From Page 1*

According to a report released by the National Water Services Commission (Span) during the Selangor Water Forum in August, the contaminants in the rivers were mainly effluents from industrial activities, poultry farm waste, oil spill and sand mining.

A source said when a water source was contaminated "beyond the treatable level", affected plants have to either reduce its production or shut down.

"This is to maintain the required standard quality of treated water as stipulated by the Health Ministry,

and to prevent posing a health risk to the public," he said. The report also named the treatment plants that had to be shut down earlier this year. Among them were Salak Tinggi in Sepang, Sungai Langat in Hulu Langat, 11th Mile Cheras, Sungai Selisik in Hulu Selangor, Ampang Intake in Bukit Belachan, Sungai Selangor Plant Phase 2 in Batang Berjuntai, and Sungai Semenyih in Dengkil.

The source of the pollutants was from the Selangor river (leachate from the Air Hitam river), Selisek (a high level of ammonia due to effluents released from a poultry farm), Langat (oil spill suspected to

have come from a quarry), Ampang (turbidity due to heavy rain), and Semenyih (leachate from a landfill in Pajam, Nilai) rivers.

It was also revealed that the Salak Tinggi water treatment plant, which gets water from the Labu river, had to be shut down each time the water level was low due to the effluents from the industries upstream near the water catchment area.

The cleanliness of rivers in Malaysia are split into five levels — with Level 1 being the cleanest.

The rivers mentioned are sometimes classified as Level 3 or above.

The source said most of the water treatment plants in the country op-

erate under the conventional process and were able to treat the raw water from the rivers effectively.

"But plant disruption can occur for hours, when pollution is severe.

"Disruption of bigger plants will have a greater impact on the water supply to the Klang Valley as they distribute water to a larger population," the source added.

It is understood that when a plant is shut down, water supply to the areas it covered relies heavily on storage tanks. This is quite risky, because the water reserve margin for the Klang Valley from 34 plants in Selangor is only at 2 per cent, way below the minimum safe level of 20

per cent. The source said the Selangor river alone supplies 61 per cent of the total treated water for the whole of Klang Valley, while the Semenyih river supplies 15 per cent and Langat river, 12 per cent.

"It is therefore, vital for a new water source to be introduced to avert a water crisis in the Klang Valley. The Pahang-Selangor Water Transfer scheme and the proposed Langat 2 water treatment plant would be the viable solution for this."

Selangor state executive councillor Dr Xavier Jeyakumar said the state government was aware of the pollution in the Selangor rivers, but declined further comment.