

PRIME NEWS

Authorities to haul river polluter to court

FULL BRUNT OF THE LAW: 'His one action affected about one million people'

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THE owner of the garbage truck maintenance centre, who allegedly dumped used engine oil into Sungai Bakau here will be hauled to court.

Apart from staring at a RM500,000 fine and mandatory five-year jail sentence for the offence, the owner will also not be allowed to operate at the premises.

Authorities are now hot on the heels of the owner, who has not responded to calls and is believed to have gone into hiding.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel said the owner would be charged under the Environmental Quality Act 1974 over his actions, which caused water supply disruptions to more than a million Klang Valley residents over the weekend.

He said the Department of Environment (DoE) would submit its investigation report to the deputy public prosecutor.

Palanivel confirmed that the depot owner would not be allowed to operate the premises again.

"We will not let him off easily. He has to face the music. His one action affected about one million people.

"We will bring him to court and he shall pay dearly for his misdeed. Even my house had no water this morning," said Palanivel after visiting the sealed-off depot and one of the water treatment plants yesterday.

Selangor Tourism, Consumer Affairs and Environment Committee chairman Elizabeth Wong said the owner of the garbage truck depot was still in hiding and had not picked up his phone.

"If he does not turn himself in to the DoE by next week, we will ask the police to find him."

Wong said the depot was legal

and had a business licence but the company would not be allowed to reopen or operate in Selangor.

As for the cost of the clean up, Wong said the state government had yet to estimate the amount.

"It (the cost) is negligible. Our priority is to make sure the river is cleared."

A Selayang Municipal Council (MPS) officer, who declined to be named, said the depot would be demolished soon.

"We know the owner as he has had contracts to process rubbish in the area," he said, adding that two MPS officers would guard the depot around the clock to ensure no one entered the premises.

Authorities had traced the contamination of the state's source of water to the depot.

Initial investigations revealed that the company had dumped lorry loads of used engine oil into Sungai Bakau, Rawang, causing

four water treatment plants to be shut down on Friday.

Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Syabas) said water supply had been fully restored in Hulu Selangor, Kuala Langat and Kuala Selangor.

However, 166 areas in four districts, Petaling, Kuala Lumpur, Klang/Shah Alam, and Gombak, continue to have supply disruption, including low water pressure.

Syabas said with 194,949 users still affected, restoring supply in these districts was expected to be time consuming.

"All water treatment plants are operating at their maximum and over-capacity levels to make up for the low treated water reserves, which stands at one per cent," the water utility company said.

The company said water would be delivered to the affected areas through lorry tankers under its 24-

Hour Code Red Emergency Response Plan.

It said 57 water lorry tankers had been deployed, including 22 from Syarikat Air Johor, Lembaga Air Perak, Syarikat Air Negeri Sembilan and the Royal Engineers Regiment.

At press time, 176 static tanks had been placed at strategic locations in the four districts, while lorry tankers had made 316 trips.

Consumers were urged to be patient and to conserve water.

"Given the large number of affected consumers, Syabas will not be able to provide adequate assistance in all areas.

"Priority will be given based on needs, such as hospitals and medical centres, dialysis centres, mosques and funeral homes."

For more information, visit www.nst.com.my or Syabas' Twitter account @puspel for updates. **Additional reporting by Rozanna Latiff**



Natural Resources and Environment Minister **Datuk Seri G. Palanivel** (centre) getting an **update on the situation from officials** at the garbage truck maintenance centre in Rawang yesterday. Pic by Halim Salleh