

'Halt approval of riverside trade'

LESSON LEARNT: Move will prevent water contamination risk in the future, says deputy minister

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STATE governments and local councils have been urged to stop approving any business activity at river reserves and to review existing ones along strategic rivers.

Deputy Minister of Energy, Green Technology and Water Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid said this would help prevent future river contamination, following the recent diesel spill in Sungai Selangor, which left more than a million

consumers suffering from water disruption.

There should be a collective effort among state governments, local councils and the Department of Environment to protect rivers from such threats, he said.

"We need to review all existing activities along the river reserves and put a freeze on the applications for activities that may contaminate rivers.

"It is risky to allow activities, such as vehicle workshops or poultry farming, near river reserves, as the discharges may harm the rivers," Mahdzir said after distributing

ihram and *telekung* to 100 haj pilgrims in the constituency at the Padang Terap Umno division office in Kuala Nerang, here, yesterday.

He was commenting on the Selangor government's instruction to local authorities in the state to impose an immediate freeze on applications for any activity to be conducted at river reserves.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim had also instructed local councils to step up the monitoring of river reserves and look out for unlicensed activities.

Mahdzir lauded the state government's move and urged other

states to follow suit.

He added that state governments should also consider stopping renewing temporary occupancy licences to business premises along river reserves, especially those deemed as risky to the rivers.

"We need collective effort from the authorities and community."

Last Friday, it was found that a lorry maintenance centre deliberately discarded diesel into a drain that flowed into Sungai Bakau, Selangor, which forced the temporary closure of the Selangor River phase 1, 2 and 3 and Rantau Panjang water treatment plants.



Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid urges all states to follow Selangor's freeze order on applications