

# We followed the law, says operator

WE view with great concern and consternation the allegations made against us in the article "A blatant disregard for the law" (NST, April 3).

The article suggests that the Bukit Tagar sanitary landfill is responsible for the recent smelly piped water incident in the Klang Valley, and that KUB-Berjaya Enviro has blatantly disregarded the law by not building a leachate treatment plant, contrary to the detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements.

The article seems to draw its conclusion from statements made by Deputy Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk S. Sothnathan in Parliament on Wednesday, March 29, (not Thursday as reported in the article) while at the same time, neglecting to take cognisance of other factors mentioned by him.

The deputy minister said there were many sources contributing to the smelly water incident, and Bukit Tagar sanitary landfill was one of the reasons.

Although we disagree with the deputy minister on Bukit Tagar's role in the smelly water incident, the article failed to give full consideration to the deputy minister's statement and elected to level blame entirely on the the Bukit Tagar landfill.

Sometime in late 2004, while the Bukit Tagar landfill was under discussion, the Government requested an immediate facility ahead of the landfill proper to meet DBKL's urgent needs in anticipation of the Puchong landfill closing its door to DBKL in January 2005. KUB-Berjaya Enviro responded to the Government's request and developed on a fast-track basis an advanced cell ahead of the landfill proper for DBKL.

Since April 2005, KUB-Berjaya Enviro has operated the advance cell catering for DBKL approximately 1,500 tonnes of daily waste, while continuing to construct the

landfill proper and its attendant facilities at the same time.

Although the advance cell is an interim facility, it is a fully-engineered cell with all the required technical and safety specifications imposed by the authorities. A proper leachate collection system is in place to intercept leachate collected on the liner where it is removed to holding ponds to be contained and treated when the leachate treatment plant is ready.

The leachate treatment plant is, in fact, ready and is now treating leachate stored in the holding ponds. The leachate treatment plant was not in place at the advent of the advance cell because no provision was made for the advance cell in the landfill proper design and construction schedule as the advance cell was an ad-hoc request from the Government. Notwithstanding, it is important to reiterate that a proper collection and storage system is in place to cater for leachate generated in the advance cell.

The authorities were aware of the leachate containment arrangements for the advance cell pending completion of the leachate treatment plant and comprehend the reasons for the absence of the leachate treatment plant at the start of the advance cell.

Therefore, the statement in the article quoting the deputy minister that "investigation by the DOE revealed that there was no leachate treatment facility at the landfill" is not reflective of the actual situation, and gives an impression that the Bukit Tagar landfill was carrying out a clandestine operation all along.

On the contrary, the Bukit Tagar sanitary landfill operates strictly to standards imposed by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the DOE through close adherence to conditions stipulated in the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) approved by the DOE.

Monthly tests on air, noise

and water quality (including regular ground water tests) are carried out by an independent consultant and the results submitted to the DOE. These results show that since the inception of operations in April 2005, Bukit Tagar has complied with the requirements of the EMP.

In actuality, the Bukit Tagar landfill has in fact constructed the leachate treatment plant ahead of schedule as the plant is designed for Phase One of the landfill proper, but is currently treating leachate from the advance cell ahead of Phase One.

Far from blatantly disregarding the law, as suggested by the NST article, Bukit Tagar has complied with the authorities' requirements and has gone to great lengths to provide the required facilities to alleviate DBKL's problems at our cost even before conclusion of the concession agreement with the Government for the landfill proper.

Imagine what would have become of DBKL's 1,500 tonnes of daily waste from April 2005 if Bukit Tagar was not allowed to receive and treat the waste.

We are also very concerned about the deputy minister's statement that Bukit Tagar landfill is one of the causes of the smelly water incident in the Klang Valley.

This is a serious allegation made against us without providing any opportunity for us to respond to the grounds for making that conclusion. From what we could surmise from Press reports, the deputy minister attributed this to Bukit Tagar's failure to construct the leachate plant and, as a result, waste water flowed into the rivers. This is a sweeping statement, and implies that the landfill is bereft of any leachate containment facilities resulting in leachate spilling into the river as a matter of course.

We have already explained the background as to the leachate treatment plant, and



The Bukit Tagar landfill in a picture taken in May last year.

highlighted the existence of leachate collection and containment system in the landfill pending completion of the leachate treatment plant (which is completed and currently commissioned).

The prescribed monthly testing carried out by the independent consultants, and our compliance with the EMP conditions, confirms that the collection and containment system is effective, and leachate spillage into the river is not the order of the day.

However, on Feb 26, during a regular balancing exercise in the landfill, leachate was accidentally spilled due to a faulty valve. The accident occurred over approximately 30 minutes and was quickly contained. The spilled leachate was subsequently pumped back into the holding pond. This incident was reported to the DOE.

It is relevant to note that while the incident occurred on Feb 26, public complaints about foul-smelling piped water happened before that, and was first reported in the media

on Feb 25.

The deputy minister also said in Parliament on March 29, that other sources were responsible for the smelly water incident, including the Kundang landfill, while previously on March 3, Selangor Infrastructure and Utilities Committee chairman Datuk Abdul Fatah Iskandar stated in the Press that pig and cattle farms, as well as palm oil and rubber factories, had been identified as the culprits behind the contamination of Sungai Selangor.

He further elaborated that the release of effluent from factories, farms, rubbish dumps and sewage ponds had caused the recent smelly water in parts of the Klang Valley.

While KUB-Berjaya Enviro is not in a position to say if these parties are the sources of pollution leading to the smelly piped water incident, it is undeniable that there are many landfills and dumpsites without leachate treatment facilities, resulting in constant and unabated leachate seeping into rivers and waterways.

This fact is recognised by the DOE.

Therefore, it is unreasonable to conclude that Bukit Tagar is one of the sources of the Feb 26 incident. Considering the small amount of leachate spilled over approximately 30 minutes and the dilution factor of the watercourse, the spillage was unlikely to be the cause.

More importantly, the accident occurred after the public first complained of smelly piped water.

Landfills have traditionally been the pre-dominant method of waste disposal. This is the principal method of waste disposal in Malaysia.

Disposal through landfill has been found to be more cost-effective than to other methods such as incineration. As incinerators are costly to build and maintain, the authorities should ensure that taxpayers are not overly burdened in their assessments.

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