

Selangor gets tough

Stern measures to curb pollution and clean up environs

SHAH ALAM: Selangor is set to implement stern and – possibly unpopular – measures to stop river pollution and clean up the environment.

They include opening two new landfills, immediate closure of dumpsites found leaking leachate, closing animal farms illegally discharging waste into rivers, and stiffer penalties on polluters.

“These moves need to be taken, even if means angering affected parties,” Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo said yesterday.

“For instance, some people will need to sacrifice space in their backyard to accommodate the two new landfills. Farmers who pollute rivers must pay for their actions.

“We will not entertain appeals any more. You dirty the river, you pay.”

Dr Khir has a new ally in his fight against pollution of the environment. Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid backs the moves by Selangor and pledged to bring the state's plight to the attention of the Cabinet.

“I will even propose a mandatory jail term for those found guilty of polluting,” Azmi said after a closed-door meeting with Dr Khir at the state administration building here.

> TURN TO PAGE 3

THE GARBAGE TRAIL

Decision to close down Sg Kembong and Kundang dumpsites with immediate effect causes havoc. Lorries laden with rubbish are sent on a wild goose chase looking for a place to unload.

1 → Garbage trucks with rubbish for Kundang ordered to proceed to Bukit Tagar landfill, but operator of landfill refuses entry.



2 → This forces 20 garbage trucks to be stranded outside the landfill.



3 → Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid and Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo told about problem while in meeting to discuss problem of river pollution. Azmi orders his officers to find out why garbage not accepted.



4 → Dr Khir orders garbage trucks to be re-routed to the Ayer Itam landfill in Puchong.



Issue neglected for too long, says Azmi

> FROM PAGE 1

“Just slapping them with fines does not drive home the message. We need to move into crisis management in dealing with solid waste disposal because we have neglected the issue for too long, and been too compromising and too late in making firm decisions.”

He said the ministry would be meeting Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on April 28 to brief the Deputy Prime Minister on the

critical problem of rubbish disposal in the Klang Valley, the dirty river problem and the proposals to protect the environment.

On cleaning up rivers, Dr Khir said a task force would be formed to monitor, study and improve the quality of water at the intake points upstream of Sungai Selangor and Sungai Langat – the major sources of raw water for the Klang Valley and Selangor.

“Any dumpsite found to be

discharging leachate will be closed. As for engineered sanitary landfills, there are plans to open two new ones,” he said.

“There are a few sites identified. They will not be disclosed now to minimise opposition. I must ask for the neighbourhood residents’ understanding.”

Dr Khir said that two years ago, the state government had wanted to create landfills in Kuala Selangor and Sepang. The plans were aborted because of

resistance from the residents.

“If we had been stern then, we may not be facing this critical situation today,” he said.

Azmi added that it was no longer a question of choosing the good over the bad.

“Rather, we are forced to choose the not-so-bad over the very bad,” he said.

Dr Khir has also issued a directive calling for the closure of any farming or animal-rearing activities found to be discharging harmful wastes into

rivers. An example is the recent closure of a pig farm in Semenyih.

“Although the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry had given a 2007 deadline to solve the problem of improperly managed pig farms, we have closed 11 farms and ordered two more operators to rehabilitate the land for farming.

“Fish farm operators must also ensure that the water discharged into the rivers is treated first,” Dr Khir said.