

Polluted rivers wash away rules, regulations

I FOUND it amusing to read reports that Johor is buying water from Singapore. I thought Malaysia is the one which should be selling water to Singapore.

By reading up a little more, I discovered that the issue was caused by river pollution from an oil palm mill, which forced water treatment plants in the area to close.

Being in the same region, the average volume of rainfall that Singapore and Malaysia get is similar, but because we have a bigger land area, we should be able to catch more rain.

The major rivers are also in Malaysia, which is why I am puzzled as to why we were pushed to take such an action.

If we think about it, the answer is simple: inefficient management of water resources and infrastructure.

Even though we have environmental laws in Malaysia, pollution is rampant.

The Johor mill pollution case was simply one that received more media attention due to water disruption. What about those cases that don't get media attention?



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Statistics from the Department of Environment tell us that the percentage of clean rivers in Malaysia dropped by 10 per cent from 2011 to 2014, showing us how serious the rate of pollution has become.

Laws and regulations are not working. It is only when a problem

such as this large-scale water disruption occurs do we hear about polluters being punished.

It's almost as if those who pollute on a smaller scale are free of guilt.

We must take note that pollution is not only caused by factories and agricultural activities.

Recently, it was reported that an average of 2,200 tonnes of rubbish are caught in river traps every month.

This may be caused by people throwing rubbish into the river directly, or indirectly contributing to the river pollution by throwing rubbish into drains and roads. Whatever we throw or pour in our drains ends up in rivers.

Even if we are lucky to live in a country with enough rainfall, we face water supply problems due to our negligence.

Nevertheless, I appreciate Singapore's help in providing us with this basic human right when we need it. I hope that this good relationship between our countries can be maintained.

I hope the Malaysian authorities will treat this issue as a wake-up call and make improvements. Instead of acting only after the problem occurs, why not put more effort into preventing it?

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