

'Impossible to monitor rivers'

DID: Public help crucial to ensure contamination is detected immediately

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PETALING JAYA: It is impossible for the authorities to constantly monitor rivers and their tributaries to prevent contamination by irresponsible parties, according to the Drainage and Irrigation Department. (DID)

The help of the public, especially people living near these raw water sources, is crucial to ensure such contamination is detected immediately, said DID river basin and coastal management division director Datuk Lim Chow Hock.

"Rivers and their tributaries run for miles and miles. There is no way for the authorities, in any part of the

world, to monitor the entire area at all times.

"We need the help of the people to alert the authorities if they know or suspect any factory of dumping waste into the rivers. Reservoirs can be easily protected from outsiders but rivers are difficult to monitor," he told *The Star* yesterday.

The relevant authorities in the state are DOE (Department of Environment) and Luas (the Selangor Water Management Authority), Lim said.

Factory owners should comply with DOE's regulations in disposing their waste, he added.

Lim was commenting on the water crisis in the Klang Valley that began on Friday when four treatment

plants, which drew water from Sungai Selangor, were shut down after diesel from a workshop in Rawang spilled into the river's tributary.

The plants produce 2.67 billion litres of water daily, catering to 57% of the demand in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya.

Consumers hit by disruptions comprised 60% of the populations of Kuala Lumpur and Shah Alam and the districts of Hulu Selangor, Kuala Selangor, Gombak, Klang and Petaling.

Syabas activated its top emergency response plan Code Red following the oil spill, but changed it to Code Yellow yesterday after supply was resumed to 96% of the

affected areas.

SPAN (the National Water Services Commission) said it was "not so easy" to contaminate the supply to households.

"The water from the river is filtered and cleaned at the treatment plants before it is sent to the households," said its communications director Carol Pelly.

Following the water cuts, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel said he would ensure the culprit was brought to court.

The person may be charged under the Environment Quality Act 1974, which carries a jail sentence of up to five years and a maximum fine of RM500,000.