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Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Syabas) tankers distributing water to Seri Kembangan residents affected by water disruption in June. — Filepic

By SHEILA SRI PRIYA
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KLANG Valley residents and business owners have been plagued by repeated water cuts this year — four and counting — yet little is known about the culprits and what action has been taken against them.

After the initial furore, the issue dies down and the case goes cold, leaving the public clueless about what exactly is being done to prevent a recurrence.

The recent Selangor state assembly saw several assemblymen raise the issue of river pollution and the ensuing water cuts that disrupted the lives of millions.

They brought up four major unscheduled water cut incidents in the Klang Valley that affected millions of households.

(These are separate from the numerous other disruptions throughout the year caused by broken pipes and scheduled plant maintenance.)

The four major water cuts were the result of river pollution by unscrupulous parties.

Subang Jaya assemblyman Michelle Ng, one of whom raised the issue in the state assembly, urged the Selangor government to form a committee with all relevant bodies to ensure the culprits face the law.

"Maybe one unscheduled water cut in four years could be accepted, but not four times in a year. We have to do everything possible to make sure this does not recur.

"The culprits must be punished without fear or favour," she said.

The first major water cut took place on June 20 and lasted two days.

A total of 377,141 households were affected after odour pollution was detected, causing the shutdown of the Sungai Semenyih water treatment plant.

The second incident was on July 19. Similar to the first incident, this too was due to odour pollution, this time at Sungai Selangor.

Over 1.1 million households were affected. The cause of the incident was believed to be spillage of black oil from motor vehicles into the Indah Water Konsortium (IWK) sewerage system.

The Selangor Water Management Body (Luas) suspected the oil to have originated from the industrial area in Batang Kali,

One cut too many

Serious efforts needed to curb contamination of raw water sources

Hulu Selangor.

The third incident took place on July 21, just days after the second incident, affecting some 1.1 million people.

About 100 litres of diesel spilled into Sungai Selangor, resulting in the shutdown of Sungai Selangor Phases 1, 2 and 3 and the Rantau Panjang water treatment plants.

Ng said the issue was first said to be an act of sabotage, but it was dismissed by the police. "It was later said to be due to negligence.

"However, this case too turned silent. Who was negligent? That is still unknown," said Ng. The fourth incident on Sept 28 resulted in the closure of the Sungai Semenyih water treatment plant due to odour pollution of the raw water source.

It was initially blamed on illegal waste disposal near the Bandar Mahkota sewage treatment plant.

However, the National Water Services Commission (SPAN) in a statement said it was not true.

The culprit was never identified and the case also turned cold, added Ng.

Her concerns were echoed by Banting assemblyman Lau Weng San who called for an update on pollution cases, especially those affecting Sungai Semenyih.

Some suggestions

Ng made several suggestions to curb cases of river pollution.

Among them was to redesign the locking system for the IWK manholes to make them inaccessible to culprits trying to dump effluents.

She urged the authorities to evaluate if the IWK management had enough manpower and a proper Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to carry out round-the-

clock surveillance.

Ng also encouraged the Selangor government to check on the effluent standards to ensure it is aligned with international ones.

"Besides making suggestions to the Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Ministry, I would like to encourage the state government to take proactive measures to follow up or set up a temporary committee that conducts regular meetings to realise these changes in the law," she said.

Ng said the approval of licences for upstream activities near water treatment plants must include a mandatory requirement for a sufficient filtration and contamination detection system.

"I would like the authorities to look at strengthening the approval process, given that contamination has taken place multiple times," she said.

Response from SPAN

SPAN chairman Charles Santiago said all the cases mentioned by Ng were under investigation.

"Two of the cases were concluded and sent to the DPP's office. The rest are still under investigation. You cannot rush these cases and there must be strong evidence," Santiago told *StarMetro*.

He added that in some cases, the culprit refused to cooperate and this meant it would take a longer time to see justice done.

"We are also looking at old laws whereby the maximum fine could just be RM5,000 or RM25,000. This has to be updated and there are efforts under way to address this," he said, adding that prosecution following investigations was a lengthy process.

He said local councils must play a greater

DISEDIAKAN
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