

Call for authorities to act against activities threatening Sungai Muda water quality

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GEORGE TOWN: Authorities in Kedah and Penang must ensure that there are no more illegal dumpsites along Sungai Muda, which serves as the main raw water source for the two states, Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) said today.

Its chief executive officer, Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa (pix), also proposed to all landowners to maintain a 30-metre riverbank reserve along the river to minimise risks of mishaps, such as chemical spillages and accidental pollution.

He said protecting the 203-km long river at all times was one of the actions that could be taken to ensure the water source for 2.16 million people in Kedah and 1.77 million in Penang would not be threatened by illegal dumping and river pollution.

“Deploy law enforcement personnel to patrol the river and riverbank areas to detect and deter illegal activities that threaten the river’s water quality, (and) evaluate all socioeconomic activities along the riverbank to ascertain the risk levels for river pollution, with a view to enacting laws to protect the river, and consequently, water supply in Kedah and Penang,” he said in a statement.

The statement was issued following yesterday’s report on the existence of an illegal 1.8 ha waste dump at Kampung Kemumbang in Sidam Kiri, Sungai Petani, Kedah, which is actually 22.8km upstream the Lahar Tiang Intake in Penang.

The report claimed that the waste found on the site included electronic waste and chemicals and PBAPP had already begun collecting and sending water samples for independent laboratory testing.

“We want to verify that the (recent) illegal waste dumping activities near Sungai Muda in Kedah have not compromised the raw water quality at the Lahar Tiang Intake.

“This (illegal dumping) incident should be regarded as a “wake-up” call for the authorities to take proper actions, immediately and conclusively. At all costs, we must prevent and avoid mishaps like the Sungai Selangor incident that affected millions of water consumers earlier this month,” he added. — Bernama