

Check entire Sungai Muda for more illegal dump sites, says Penang water company

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The dumping ground next to Sungai Muda in Kedah.

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBA) today urged the authorities to check the length of Sungai Muda in Kedah for illegal dumpsites following the discovery of one such site over the weekend.

In a statement, PBA CEO Jaseni Maidinsa also called for immediate action to prevent a repeat of the incident at Sungai Selangor which saw a diesel spill earlier this month.

“It is shocking to read about the illegal dumping of electronic and chemical waste upstream from Penang’s primary raw water intake in Lahar Tiang,” he said.

“Landowners next to the river must maintain a 30m riverbank buffer to minimise the risks of mishaps such as chemical spillages and accidental pollution.

“The local authorities must make sure they don’t encroach the buffer. Better yet, law enforcers ought to patrol the river and riverbank areas 24/7, to deter illegal activities.”

The dumping ground at Sungai Muda, the size of approximately five football fields, had sparked concerns over the safety of the water being used for drinking and to irrigate padi fields.

However, Jaseni assured that tap water remains safe for use, based on 3,182 treated water samples taken last year, and said PBA would also take new samples for testing.



According to him, Penang extracts 80% of its raw water from the river, while Kedah's Syarikat Air Darul Aman extracts 100% to supply the southern portion of Kedah.

He said the Sungai Selangor incident should serve as a wake-up call to the authorities in Kedah and Penang to take all necessary preventive action.

"At all costs, we must prevent and avoid mishaps like the Sungai Selangor incident that affected millions of water consumers," he said, adding that legal provisions exist under the Drainage and Irrigation Department, Department of Environment and local councils to prevent illegal activities.