

Nip the problem in the bud

Comment by WONG CHUN WAI

IT'S time to be blunt because we are seething.

For far too long, all the warning signs of a potential water disaster affecting Kuala Lumpur and Selangor have been ignored.

Our politicians and authorities were alerted, but true to their nature, they did diddly-squat. All the warnings fell on deaf ears.

So now, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor have the dubious distinction of having the most water disruptions in the country. And let's not even talk about the kind of water we have been drinking.

In as early as 2012, Universiti Putra Malaysia discovered that most rivers in Selangor – which feed the state's water supply – were polluted.

The institute of higher learning specifically said that the pollution issue could seriously threaten the availability of this basic necessity.

UPM Universiti Environmental Forensics Research Centre unit head Dr Hafizan Juahir said the clean water sections of the rivers were getting shorter due to development, especially housing.

For example, he said, the length of Sungai Langat, the leading source of raw water in the state, was 149.3km long, but the clean water section had been reduced to only

As long as we don't address the pollution of water resources, we must be prepared for more disruptions.

49.3km, with the rest polluted.

"The entire length of Sungai Langat has entered the Class 3 and 4 categories of being polluted, and if the quality worsens, it can be considered a dead river," he said.

He said that in the Hulu Langat district, the situation was more serious because there was too much development, especially of condominiums and shophouses.

Population increase has also negatively impacted water quality through washing and domestic waste dumping in the river.

"I am a scientist and researcher. I speak based on facts of water quality. I see the details of every parameter of water quality or water quality trend index. There is very little clean water left," he said.

The problem is, every time we face water shortage, we blame it on the weather.

We take our water resource for granted because with our frequent rainfall, our dams should always be filled, or so we assume.

Then, we talk about building more water treatment plants, but never execute those plans.

The demand for water supply

will keep increasing in the Klang Valley because it's the most populous and industrialised location in the country, but treating water will get more expensive as water quality deteriorates.

It doesn't help when nitwit politicians, in wanting to raise their stock, promise free water to the people of Selangor during elections.

Obviously, they could hardly care about the consequences.

There is little point in discussing restructuring the water industry when more urgent issues, like the pollution of water resources, is not addressed.

It isn't just the government.

We are all guilty of overlooking water pollution. We treat our rivers like dumpsites, so, we deserve lousy water quality in return.

Dr Hafizan suggests Selangor source water from Sungai Pahang, especially since water from that river isn't as polluted as the rivers in Selangor.

Truth be told, uncontrolled and unplanned development comes at a heavy price.

One research report indicates that "water quality degradation in

the Selangor River will still be present in the years to come since pollutant loads from poultry farms, municipal wastewaters, and industrial wastewaters are not envisaged to be handled effectively."

"This will be facing the problems of water quality status to use for multiple purposes and to provide its aquatic environment continuously. The water quality evaluation system is used to assess the water quality condition in the river," it said.

"This system distinguishes two categories of water condition - i.e., the water quality index and water quality aptitude. The assessment of water quality for the Selangor River from nine stations along the mainstream, which concludes that water has been highly polluted immediately downstream of station 02 Selangor River before confluence with Kubu River due to high concentration of microorganisms and immediately downstream of station 06 Selangor River before confluence with Batang Kali River due to high concentrations of microorganisms and suspended particles, was verified."

So suddenly, Selangor politicians

have awakened from their slumber of ignorance and begun talking about water pollution when the problem has been staring at them for decades. Too little too late?

Even the Ruler of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, has said that recommendations he made for overcoming the water issue appeared to have no effect at all since the problem has persisted and inconvenienced his subjects.

Now, the Selangor state government has spent RM2mil on four military-grade drones to be deployed next month to catch water polluters.

We'd like to think it's a brilliant idea, but it sounds like another knee-jerk reaction by politicians to appease angry consumers.

It's safer to prepare for another round of water disruptions than to believe them because accountability is apparently not part of their vocabulary.



Warning!
Angry when dry
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