

## Sungai Muda in need of protection, say state govts

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GEORGE TOWN: The Penang and Kedah governments have been urged to take steps to protect the Sungai Muda waterway, a primary source of raw water for the two states.

Penang Water Holdings Authority (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said it is essential to ensure that there is a 30m buffer zone for a 203km stretch of the waterway.

Recently, several dump sites with plastic, electronic and industrial wastes from households and factories were found as close as 30m from the river.

The dump sites are located near Sungai Petani, an industrial township where illegal plastic processing factories were found last year.

On a visit to the area, National Water Services Commission chairman Charles Santiago pointed out that the river must be monitored, protected and conserved to sustain water supply security for millions of people and thousands of businesses in the two states.

In a statement issued today, Jaseni suggested that patrols and periodic drone surveillance be carried out along the riverside.

“We should also have signages to inform land owners about the need to preserve the area,” he said. In response to the discovery of the dump sites, the authorities are already monitoring the quality of the raw water daily.

“Our central laboratory in Sungai Dua is on high alert, and we will continue to sample and test the raw water that comes in daily,” he added.

PBAPP is also commissioning independent tests to verify claims of heavy metals found in the water.

Santiago said those who intentionally pollute the river must be brought to justice.

In another development, state environment committee chairman Phee Boon Poh claimed that the recent haze in Penang was caused by the the burning of rubbish at the dump sites.