

30m buffer zone at strategic rivers a must to ensure water supply security



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By **Audrey Dermawan** - September 8, 2020 @ 4:56pm

GEORGE TOWN: A 30m buffer zone on both sides of strategic rivers is the way to go to ensure water supply security for consumers, Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) said today.

The state-owned company, responsible for water supply services, said Penang had implemented the 30m buffer zone along both sides of the 14km stretch of the Sungai Dua canal downstream from Sungai Muda, where it extracted raw water from before channeling it into the Sungai Dua water treatment plant, since 2008.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said they had even advised other states to do so to prevent incidences of pollution, like that of the water pollution case of Sungai Gong in Rawang involving an illegal factory.

"However, the issue is people always take water for granted. In Malaysia, the people lack respect for our rivers.

"I always say...the rivers which we draw water from should be considered as strategic rivers. We must ensure a 30m buffer zone along both sides of these strategic rivers and 24/7 security.

"With the 30m buffer zone, if there are any developments and drainage systems are built, the dirty water will not enter into the raw water source if there are leakages (of the drainage systems). The buffer zone can stop the infiltration of dirty water into the raw water source," he said when asked on PBAPP's action to prevent water pollution, like that of Sungai Gong.

Jaseni pointed out that illegal factories within buffer zones at strategic rivers should be immediately demolished; while legal factories in those areas should be relocated as soon as possible.

"Issuing a RM1 million fine after a pollution happens is pointless. Prevention is the way to go.

"The existing laws are sufficient to deal with the water pollution problem.

"In the Sungai Gong case, a notice was issued back in 2014 and the factory has been operating illegally without licence. They are laws to take appropriate action. What is needed is will power to enforce these laws as this involves water security," he said.

Jaseni added that the lack of buffer zone along strategic rivers meant that there could be a repeat of the pollution issue like Sungai Gong.

"If the authorities do not enforce the buffer zone strictly, we might face the same issue again," he noted.