

11.5.2021

Media Release

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WATER TREATMENT PLANT RESIDUE IS A NATIONAL ISSUE WHICH IS BEING TACKLED AT FEDERAL LEVEL

- **The handling of water treatment plant residue is being resolved at federal level, as stated by KASA.**
- **SPAN, DOE and KASA are aware of operations at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and other Malaysian WTPs.**

PENANG, Tuesday, 11.5.2021: As part of its ISO9001:2015 and ISO14001:2015 commitments to continuous improvement in quality and environmental management, Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) is concerned about proper handling of water treatment plant (WTP) residue.

Given options, PBAPP would prefer to treat, recycle or dispose of WTP residue in a more environment-friendly and institutionalised manner, in compliance with government regulations. This is being done by water operators in countries such as Canada, Japan, Netherlands, Singapore, USA and the United Kingdom.

WTP residue is not a new issue for water operators in Malaysia. Since 2009, PBAPP and other Malaysian water operators have called on the federal authorities to regulate WTP residue and build national facilities for proper handling of WTP residue.

The Malaysia Water Association (MWA), Pengurusan Aset Air Berhad (PAAB) and the Malaysian District Water Engineers Action Committee (JTJAD, now known as MyWAC) have echoed our calls for action.

Since PBAPP is a licensed Malaysian water supply operator, the daily operations of all water treatment plants in Penang are regulated and monitored by three national agencies:

- The National Water Services Commission (SPAN) and
- The Department of the Environment (DoE), under the Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA).
- Ministry of Health (MOH)

As such, SPAN, DoE and KASA are aware that the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP) has been discharging WTP residue into Sungai Merbau Kudung, a tributary of Sungai Perai.

They are also aware of the fact that the majority of WTPs in other Malaysian states are discharging WTP residue into other rivers in Malaysia, on a daily basis. As mentioned before, SPAN has estimated that Malaysian WTPs produced a total of 5,500 metric tons of WTP residue per day.

In November 2020, KASA stated in a parliamentary reply that it was in the process of amending the Water Services Industry Act 2006 (WSIA) to include provisions for the setting up of common facilities to treat, recycle and/or dispose of WTP residue properly in Malaysia.

We have been awaiting such actions for more than 10 years. We intend to work with the Federal Government to properly manage WTP residue.

WTP residue is not a public hazard

The main content of WTP residue is residual aluminium resulting from the use of aluminium sulphate or polyaluminium chloride in conventional water treatment. Other metal compounds are not typically used in water treatment processes in Malaysia.

Independent tests conducted by MWA, PAAB and MyWAC have found that residue from Malaysian WTPs is NOT toxic, corrosive, carcinogenic, ignitable, reactive and hazardous to the aquatic environment.

In Penang, the PBAPP Central Laboratory monitors and tests residue from the Sungai Dua WTP regularly to ensure compliance to the Environmental Quality (Industrial Effluent) Regulations 2009 (EQR 2009).

Please note that the PBAPP Central Laboratory is a Malaysian Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (SAMM) facility that has been awarded 3 consecutive “Laboratory Excellence Awards” by the Malaysian Institute of Chemistry (IKM) in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Interim measures to minimise environmental impact

While awaiting the commissioning of national facilities to handle WTP residue, PBAPP has been implementing the following interim measures to minimise the environmental impact of the Sungai Dua WTP’s operations:

- Weekly monitoring and testing of WTP residue discharges into Sungai Merbau Kudung to ensure that it is non-hazardous; and
- Regularly dredging a stretch of Sungai Merbau Kudung to mitigate excessive sedimentation build-up on the river bed

Thank You.

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