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MB: MEC City contractors will act to overcome river siltation

KUANTAN, Sun. - Contractors involved in the construction of the RM4 billion MEC City in Jalan Gambang, near here, will take remedial measures to overcome siltation affecting the nearby Sungai Belat, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob said today.

Khalil said the contractors had no choice but to carry out earthworks near the river bank to ensure the project, carried out on a 1,200-hectare site, could be completed accordingly.

"The State Government knows about this but I want to give an assurance that this is just temporary and at this stage, it is inevitable. Similar problems will crop up in every new project.

"However, the contractors have been told to take immediate action to correct it once everything has been put into place."

Khalil added that the contractors would also create buffer zones and build embankments near the river bank once earthworks were completed.

"Once the construction of the embankments start, the problem will be overcome," he said, adding that the embankments would also be built within the city proper.

Khalil added that the contractors would also plant trees along the river to strengthen the bank.

He was commenting on claims by residents staying within the vicinity that the project had caused siltation and the river had turned murky.

One of the residents, R. Punggavaham, 64, a caretaker of the Gambang temple, located close to the river, said worshippers used to bathe in the river before performing their prayers.

"However, since the project began a few months ago, the water has become brownish and murky. The cement bathing area which I built for followers is clogged with silt and each time my grandchildren want to bathe in the river, they have to use coconut husk to clear the place of mud and silt.

"The thick silt also makes the spot rather slippery," he said.

Housewife Rosnah Deris, 33, said before the project was started, she and her children used to bathe in the river and consume the water. "But now, I dread swimming in it for fear of my health.

"I also make sure that my children do not take their bath in the river anymore ... not until they do something about it."

MEC City is a project by Malaysian Electric Corporation Bhd to turn Gambang into the country's manufacturing centre for electrical appliances under a Malaysian brand name.

The development of the city will enable the State Government to create a growth triangle that will also cover Gebeng and Bukit Sagu.

Khalil said the growth triangle would spearhead the State Government's move to industrialise the State.

If the project is successful, it would mark a new era in the country's electrical appliances industry.

Khalil, who is also Lepar State Assemblyman, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was expected to officiate the opening of the city "very soon."

Khalil added that the State Government anticipated employment opportunities for hundreds of people, especially youths, once the companies started their operations.

"There will be jobs for everybody, from semi-skilled to skilled workers," he said, adding that it was too costly for the State Government

to develop the area.

"We are grateful to the company undertaking this project," he added.

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