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LRT firm under fire for sewage pollution

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KUALA Lumpur Datuk Bandar Tan Sri Kamaruzzaman Sharif took Projek Usahasama Transit Ringan Automatik Sdn Bhd or Putra to task for polluting Sungai Klang with raw untreated sewage while Kuala Lumpur is still under cholera alert.

Cholera, a fast-spreading water-borne disease, was detected in the Klang Valley, especially in Petaling Jaya and parts of Kuala Lumpur, last month with about 50 people being screened and at least 11 were confirmed positive.

The sewage gushing into the river cause by "back-flow" through a safety valve on the riverbank in Jalan Melaka is a result of the breakdown in the pumping station near the Bank Bumiputra headquarters in Jalan Melaka. It is Putra's job to maintain it.

Kamaruzzaman said City Hall was always reminding residents not to use the rivers as a rubbish bin but a supposedly responsible corporate giant was now polluting the river.

He was speaking to the Press after launching the logo of the Fifth International Congress on AIDS in the Asia Pacific at the Kuala Lumpur Hilton yesterday. Also present was Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir.

"While we are now in the midst of launching Love Your River and Drain campaign as a way of cleaning and beautifying our waterways, Putra is polluting the river," he said.

"We shall ask Putra to immediately remedy the situation including repairing the broken pump. We cannot tolerate such an irresponsible act."

Kamaruzzaman was commenting a news report in the New Straits Times yesterday that highlighted the situation which has been going on unchecked for a few months.

The stench from the sewage is causing anxiety and uneasiness to office workers, college students and the public passing the area.

Kamaruzzaman said his office will contact Putra and ask the concessionaire of the RM4.35 billion Putra-LRT system to take remedial measures and not allow the sewage to be discharged into the river.

Under normal condition when the pumps are working, the sewage will flow uninterrupted through underground pipes to the Pantai Dalam treatment plant operated by Indah Water Konsortium Sdn Bhd.

Sewerage services department director Ahmad Rozian Othman had said the department gave Putra until March 19 to repair the pumps.

They did but it was an unsatisfactory job resulting in more sewage "back-flow".

Ahmad Rozian said he was present at the site together with a representative from Putra when the Department of Environment (DoE) visited the site and took samples which were sent to the Chemistry Department for tests.

He said DoE might fine Putra for polluting the river after receiving a report from the Chemistry Department adding that the matter could be avoided if Putra was more proactive in tackling the problem.

"The normal sewage pipe was 'damaged' by Putra due to the construction work on the 4.4km twin tunnels near the Pasar Seni and they installed the pump house as a temporary measure for pumping the sewage to the Pantai Dalam plant.

"Once the work on the tunnels is completed, the pipes will be repaired

and the sewage will flow uninterrupted through gravitational force," he said.

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