

S'gor govt proposes harsher punishment for river polluters

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The Selangor government today reiterated its effort to push for harsher punishment against river polluters who caused the disruption of water supply.

At a press conference today, Menteri Besar Amirudin Shari said the state government will seek to double the maximum fine to RM1 million against the offenders.

This will be made possible with the amendment to the Selangor Water Management Authority (Luas) Enactment 1999 in the coming state legislative assembly sitting in November.

This came after a second case of river pollution detected in Selangor this month which resulted in over a million households affected by another round of water cuts.

Subsequently, Amirudin's press secretariat office said the suggested amendment is to increase the fine from RM100,000 as stated in subsection 79(4) of the enactment to a minimum of RM200,000 and a maximum not exceeding RM1 million.

"Since it's a serious offence under Section 79, the prison sentence is mandatory.

"The punishment will be a deterrent factor to prevent any party from contaminating water sources," the statement read.

Discount on water bills to be decided later

Amirudin said the state government had instructed Pengurusan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd to step up its monitoring operations at river basins to prevent future pollution.

A total of 20 fulltime and contract staff will be deployed for the duty, he added.

The recent water disruption had caused public outrage with many saying they deserved discounted water bills, while others openly demanded the resignation of the menteri besar.

When asked about the discount on water bills, Amirudin said the matter had been discussed but a decision will be made later.

He, however, appeared not to be in favour of the idea of giving a discount.

"We will decide later because it is better for us to spend a larger fund to prevent (the river from being) polluted.

"If we give everyone a RM2 discount, we need to fork out about RM4 million in cost. It is better to utilise the RM4 million to increase manpower to detect river pollution or to block the polluted river from getting into (water treatment plants)," he said.

The menteri besar also rebutted criticism that the state government and relevant water operators had done nothing.

The latest pollution incident was detected by a water operator staff 4km away from the water intake, he said.

Amirudin, who acknowledged public anger over the water disruption, said he reacted in a positive manner to resolve the river pollution.

"We focus on resolving the issue. Those who were angry lost their composure and we can only keep calm and try to resolve the issue rather than resorting to finger-pointing," he said.

He said the state government was also working on relocating the factories which are situated close to raw water supply in the Klang Valley.

Other measures included the usage of four DJI Matrice 300 drones starting November which can monitor the river basin and detect pollution.

The RM2 million military-grade drones will be used to cover about 1,000km of the Klang River Basin, Sungai Selangor, and Sungai Langat.

According to Amirudin, the drones are equipped with the ability to analyse possible pollution in the river basin and carry out remedial works.

"Do not just look at the drone as a machine, look at its functions.

"The focus of the company (drone supplier) is not on the drone itself, but to analyse the contents of the river so (pollution) can be detected at the early stage," he said.

The operation of the drones will cost about RM138 per day and they will be deployed twice a day, added Amirudin.

Yesterday, former prime minister Najib Abdul Razak questioned the need for Selangor to spend RM500,000 on each drone.

"Selangor bought four drones to monitor the rivers. Cost RM2 million in total. Each drone cost RM500,000," Najib said in a Facebook post.

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