

Enforcement against illegal oil recycling operations

DOE moves in following detection of black sludge in Sungai Anak Air Garam in Negri Sembilan

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NEGRI Sembilan Environment Department (DOE) has shut down an illegal used-oil-recycling operation suspected of dumping contaminated waste into Sungai Anak Air Garam, near Mambau.

This is the second illegal recycling premises the department has shuttered within a span of 24 hours, following the detection of black sludge in the river last week.

The first factory was found to have stored about 1,000 tonnes of used oil.

The second factory, in Jalan Kuala Sawah in Rantau district, was sealed after department officers found about 300 tonnes of the used oil stored there.

Both factory operators did not have a licence from DOE nor the local council to run the business.

State environment, health, cooperatives and consumerism committee chairman S. Veerapan said he directed the department to investigate and take action against the culprits behind the illegal waste dumping activities and to be more aggressive in stopping such illegal businesses.

"Those behind these illegal operations know it is wrong and have been doing their best to avoid detection," he said during the DOE operation at the illegal premises.

He added that the state government had so far spent RM2.1mil to clean up Sungai Anak Air Garam.

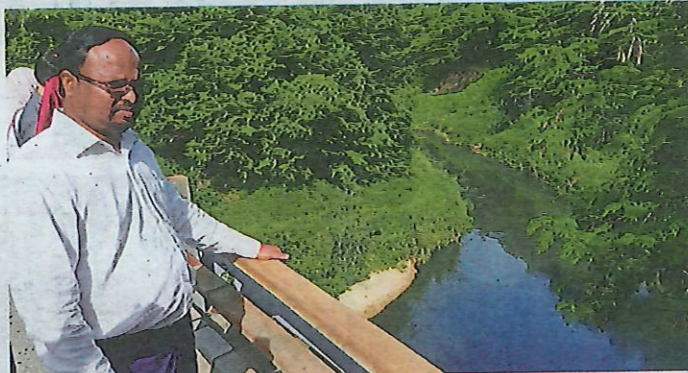
Veerapan said checks at the second premises found the operator had dumped the sludge from the recycled oil into a pond behind the factory.

"The public tipped us off about these illegal factories and their activities.

"The operator built a pipe network and dumped the sludge, which is considered scheduled waste, into a pond."

The waste then overflowed into a drain that led to the river, he elaborated.

He said the sludge should have been sent to the Kualiti Alam Waste Management Centre nearby, which is licensed to treat the wastewater, instead of it being dumped



Veerapan looking at the black sludge contaminating Sungai Anak Air Garam during a clean-up operation by the authorities. — SARBAN SINGH/The Star

untreated straight into a pond that ultimately polluted the river.

He added the landowner and operator of the illegal factories would be called in to assist DOE's probe into the river contamination.

Villagers in the surrounding area alerted authorities about the contamination.

Following this, a team from DOE along with state Water Regulatory Agency (BKSA), Syarikat Air Negri Sembilan (SAINS) and the Fire and Rescue Department personnel went to the location on Dec 9 to conduct clean-up operations.

"We will take samples for analysis, process the evidence and then proceed with court action," said Veerapan, adding that offenders could be charged under Section 34B of the Environmental Quality Act 1974, which provides a jail sentence of up to five years and a fine of up to RM500,000 upon conviction.

Asked how long the operator had been in business, Veerapan said authorities were still investigating but the latter believed it was for some time based on the amount of

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dry sludge found in the area.

Last week, DOE shut down a plant in Rasah found to be illegally processing used oil for recycling that was allegedly brought in from Singapore.

The used oil was believed to be from the republic's shipping industry and had been declared as fuel oil before being transported into Malaysia.