

'Awareness can prevent future cases'

KUALA LUMPUR: Public awareness and vigilance can prevent future cases of pollution in the sewerage waste water system.

Alliance for Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said while it was important for authorities to prevent such cases from recurring, the public could be the eyes and ears of the authorities.

He said it was important to educate the public on how sewerage waste water treatment plants worked.

"It is a misconception that any sort of illegal waste dumped into the wastewater treatment facility will be flushed away automatically.

"As such, with awareness, the public can play an important role (as in the case of Sungai Semenyih, where it happened in a residential area) in reporting such incidents to the authorities.

"Proper hotlines should be established and the public should

be informed of such numbers.

"A one-stop complaint centre is another possible solution."

He was commenting on the water disruption that has affected 1.5 million people in Hulu Langat, Kuala Langat and Sepang following the complete shutdown of the Sungai Semenyih Water Treatment plant on Saturday.

The incident, the third case this year, was caused by odour pollution due to the disposal of illegal toxic waste with solvent odours into Indah Water Konsortium manholes in Bandar Bukit Mahkota.

He said the plant had been closed several times since 2006, and each time, the disposal of illegal waste was cited as the main culprit.

He said this was not the first time such irresponsible acts were committed, remedial action was promised and excuses were given due to the lack of action.

"And I dare say, it won't be long

before there is another repeat of such irresponsibility if the bitter lessons are not learnt."

He urged irresponsible parties to compensate consumers when water disruptions occur.

"It is time for the government to work hand in hand with the public to put a stop to perpetrators who have caused such a massive inconvenience and hardship.

"An unlawful act that is repeatedly committed shows a total disregard by guilty parties towards enforcement and the authorities."

Lee urged the Department of Environment and National Water Service Commission to ensure that companies handling chemical waste declare the types of chemicals and other types of potential pollutants that they use in their processes.

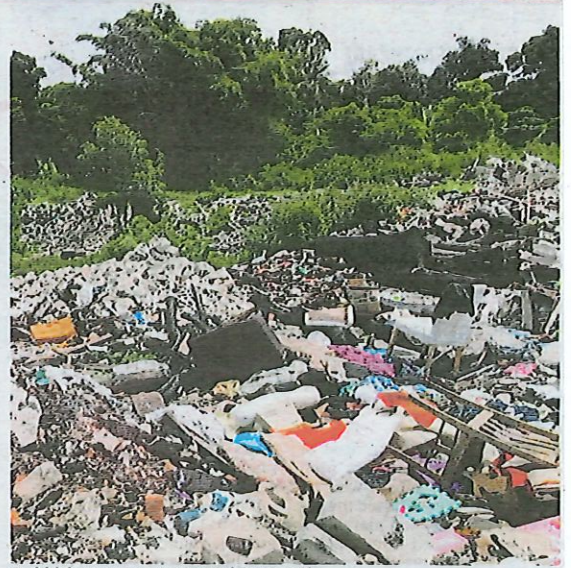
"By maintaining a current list, tracing back chemical pollutants to its source may become easier.

"As an indirect effect, these companies will also feel the presence of the authorities when it comes to the discharge of waste.

"Illegal factories should be tracked down and their operations shut down."



Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye



Rubbish strewn near Sungai Semenyih.

He said it was high time for every quarter to get serious because Malaysians were lackadaisical about protecting water resources, from the poor enforcement of laws to the wasteful use of water and river pollution.

Lee said the media had high-

lighted people's hardship and misery due to their neglect in protecting water resources.

He congratulated the *New Straits Times* for its report in Monday's edition under the headline "Water disruption: It's time to get serious". By Ahmad Fairuz Othman