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Bringing dirtiest river back to life

Johor DOE confident it can clean up Sungai Tukang Batu

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JOHOR BARU: Authorities in Johor will continue to work around the clock to change the status of Sungai Tukang Batu in Pasir Gudang, currently dubbed Malaysia's dirtiest river.

Johor Department of Environment (DoE) director Mohd Faniey Yusoff said a joint cooperation between agencies had been conducted to clean the river.

"DoE has always worked together with other agencies such as the state Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) and the local council so that we can improve the condition of the river.

"Sungai Tukang Batu is one of the most polluted rivers in our country. It has been contaminated for a long time. DoE will play its role in ensuring that the river will be in a better condition," he said after attending the launch of the Environmental Day celebration in Hutan Bandar Iskandar Putri City Council (MBIP) Mutiara Rini yesterday.



Dirty record: Some of the most polluted rivers in Malaysia are located in Johor.

He was commenting on *The Star's* special report on the state of the country's rivers, with some of the most polluted located in Johor, including Sungai Tukang Batu.

"We are aware of the news report and we wanted the public to know the real situation so that we can work together to change the status of the river," he added.

Pollution in Sungai Tukang Batu, said Mohd Faniey, not only came from industrial activities but was also due to nearby residential sewage.

DoE, he said, would continue to monitor the situation of the river and pledged to take stern action against any individual or industry found guilty of contributing to its pollution.

Sungai Tukang Batu is so polluted that a *Star* reporter taking pictures and video of the river could not stand the odour despite wearing a face mask. It is listed in Class 5, meaning its water is so dirty that it is not suited for use either to supply water or even for irrigation.

In the latest Environmental Quality Report 2018, the DoE had increased the number of rivers it tracks continuously to 638 last year compared to 477 in 2017.

Sungai Tukang Batu continues to hold the record for having the worst Water Quality Index (WQI) with a reading of 22.

The WQI divides rivers into three categories: Polluted (0-50), Slightly Polluted (60-80) and Clean (81-100). The report also separates rivers into five classes with Class 1 being pristine and Class 5 the most polluted.

Of the 638 rivers monitored last year, 357 or 56% showed clean water quality, 231 (36%) were slightly polluted while 50 (8%) were polluted.

A higher WQI reading shows a better water quality.