

KERATAN AKHBAR

AKHBAR	:	THE STAR		
TARIKH	:	27/12/2019	MUKA SURAT	: 20
JABATAN	:	UMUM		
KLASIFIKASI	:	PERHATIAN		

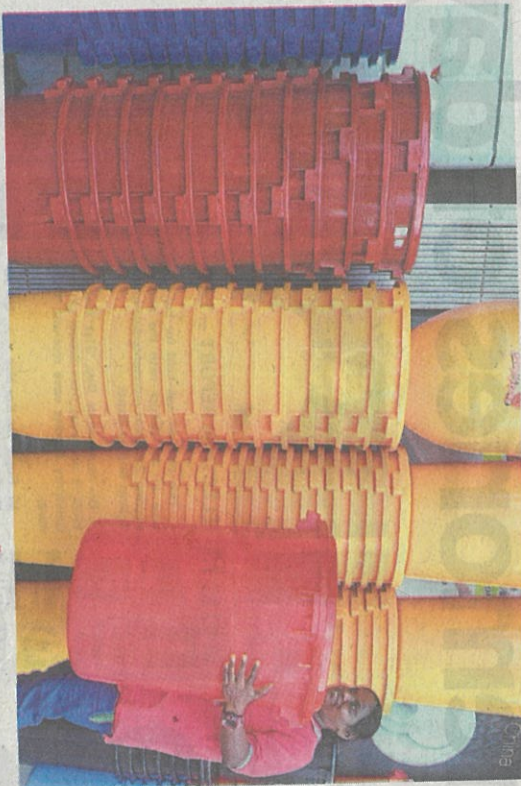
Key element of prosperity

AND once again, a malodour incident has cropped up to disrupt the supply of water, this time involving the water intake point along the Senenyih River in the Klang Valley. It was only three months ago that residents in parts of the Klang Valley had to endure a similar water supply disruption; the reason then was also a malodour problem.

I can understand the frustration expressed by the millions of people affected. Any experience of water shortage is truly painful for those affected. But why are we not addressing the root cause of such disruptions?

It is not that we do not have enough water. Every year, we enjoy a huge amount of rainfall from the monsoons. Many other countries are not as fortunate. There have been reports of droughts and acute water shortage in many countries. The situation in some parts of Africa has been reported to be critical. Our problem is that we are not managing all that water properly. Even at this moment of writhing, some states in the country are inundated with floods, which also disrupt living. It is true what they say: Too much water and too little water are both disastrous.

Looking at all the recent water supply disruption incidents, the major culprit seems to be water pollution, or to be exact, river pollution. The concern of many people is that it is happening much too often, and for the same reason.



According to reports from various authorities, many of our rivers are heavily polluted. At the Academy of Sciences Malaysia, the water committee has produced reports providing evidence of the seriousness of river pollution in the country. Unfortunately, the warnings seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

We need to be more proactive in tackling this issue. This becomes more urgent since most of our water intake points are on rivers. We have not yet tapped our underground water resources, except maybe in parts of Kelantan. Following all these many and repeated incidents of river pollution in recent times, it may be time to review why we are not extracting ground water.

Notwithstanding that, the river pollution issue needs urgent attention in terms of addressing the root causes of these incidents of pollution. Looking at past cases, it has become obvious to many that it is the illegal disposal of hazardous and scheduled wastes that is the problem. The issue has been highlighted many times before. But the obvious solution has not been taken seriously.

Many have suggested creating better awareness among the public and industries with education as a possible remedy. This takes time. Other mitigating instruments include the enforcement of laws and regulations on discharge and disposal standards. Apparently, at least in these cases, such measures have limited effectiveness. Some

blame inefficient enforcement, while others say the punishments for such offences are just too lenient. We may need to resort to better monitoring technology as well as the imposition of harsher penalties.

The first step is to get all premises using hazardous materials in their business to regularly report the amounts they have, including the amounts that require disposal. Second, those that require disposal must be sent to the treatment facility in Bukit Nanas, Kuala Lumpur. With the increasing quantities of polluting chemicals being used, perhaps additional treatment facilities are required. A ledger system using blockchain may be worth considering to keep track. Third, the monitoring should be coordinated by the Department of Environment working closely with local authorities.

The Housing and Local Government Ministry announced recently an initiative to create smart cities. We will never have smart cities if the management of polluting wastes is still in such disarray. The government has also recently launched the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, which is laudable. Taking care of something as vital to life as our water resources is undeniably a key element of shared prosperity.

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