

Selasa

STAR

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Dept gets orders to act against farms around 'ailing' dam

KLUANG: The state government has directed the Department of Environment and Land Office to carry out immediate enforcement operations against farms around the Sembrong Dam following the threat of pollution.

Johor Public Works, Rural and Regional Development committee chairman Datuk Hasni Muhammad said that the move was necessary to protect the water source for the more than 120,000 people in the districts of Kluang and Batu Pahat.

He said that enforcement checks would cover modern farming, smallholders, plantations and a pig farm near the dam.

Hasni added that although the water quality was still safe for consumption, the state was concerned about the dam's long-term viability to produce the quality that met international standards.

"This issue has been raised at length at the state Exco meeting recently.

"We are formulating ways to prevent the situation from worsening," he said, adding that the Sembrong Dam was an important water source until the Kahang dam is completed in the next few years.

Hasni added that modern farming should be using a lot of technology but instead the farmers were still using pesticides and chemicals.

"We do not want a Cameron Highlands to happen here," he said.

He added that one of the issues identified was that there was no proper drainage or buffer zone to treat all these pesticides and fertilisers before they are channelled into the dam.

Johor Agriculture and Agro-Based Industries exco Ismail Mohamed said that the Veterinary and Agriculture Departments have been directed to issue guidelines to farmers on the proper usage of pesticides and fertilisers in the area.

"It is not fair to blame the modern farming which covers some 3,480ha as there are a lot of smallholders and oil palm plantations around the dam," he said, adding that the project involved some 29 companies.