

Investigations on treatment plant explosion in Bukit Badong concluded

The report of the investigations will be presented to the DPP for further action

by AFIQ AZIZ

INVESTIGATIONS on the explosion that occurred at the Selangor River Phase 3 Water Treatment Plant (SSP3) in Bukit Badong, which was initiated in March last year, have finally concluded.

National Water Services Commission (SPAN) chairman Charles Santiago told *The Malaysian Reserve* (TMR) the report of the investigations is completed and would be presented to the deputy public prosecutor (DPP) soon for further action.

"The Syarikat Pengeluar Air Sungai Selangor (Splash) explosion report has been completed, and investigations concluded. Once it is submitted, we'd have to wait for the DPP to suggest if there was any infringement that occurred," he said.

However, Santiago did not specify any deadline for the report to be submitted and reviewed by the DPP.

"They are working on it. So, I can't issue any statement on this yet," he said.

The report, which has been up in the air for quite a while, was only expedited after Santiago's appointment at SPAN last November.

Santiago told TMR then, he would "definitely look into the incident" and find out if Splash was responsible for the "explosion", which caused severe injuries to five workers.

He said the report was also expected to factor in the possibility of compensation for affected residents.

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TMR pic

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The last reported water cut in the Klang Valley was in April, which affected 620,835 account holders or 4.14 million consumers in 577 areas within 86 hours.

The cut was attributed to the upgrading works at the SSP2.

This week, another series of water cut has been announced, and no less than 758 areas in seven districts in Selangor are expected to face four days of disruption between July 23 and July 26.

Some 758,000 households of three million people who live and work in the "richest state of the country" will be affected including those in Klang, Petaling Jaya, Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Langat, Hulu Selangor and Kuala Selangor.

The scheduled disruption is a result

of seven upgrading works at the SSP1 which will be supervised by Pengurusan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd.

Santiago had already warned Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Syabas) to ensure the current water supply disruption be restored on time by 9pm on July 26, or the commission will request Selangor MB Amirudin Shari to remove Syabas' senior management.

The scheduled maintenance, however, was postponed to another date due to the unexpected odour pollution in Sungai Selangor, causing four water treatment plants to fully shut down last Friday, which affected more than one million households in the Klang Valley over the weekend.

Meanwhile, Association of Water and Energy Research Malaysia S Piara-

pakaran said should any breach of clauses be found in the SSP3, Splash's concession over the treatment plant could be revoked.

He said this could be an avenue for the state to recover some portion from the total of RM2.55 billion that was forked out during the takeover of Splash last year, which was also part of the state's water consolidation plan.

"I've brought up this issue again recently, but it is rather very cloudy on what had happened to the investigations report. I was also made to understand the state would be the one to determine the party that would decide to revoke the SSP3 concession.

"Whatever it is, if the concession is revoked, it would be a new development for us. Syabas may have an avenue

and the right to ask Splash to return a portion of the total buyout figure.

"A higher price would translate to a higher future tariff that could be passed down to the consumers. We do not want that," he told TMR.

Piarapakaran said the concluded report on the SSP3 plant incident should be made public so that the people can understand the real cause of their suffering.

As for the repetitive water disruption in Selangor, Piarapakaran said the state should have settled the crisis by implementing better treatment plant management.

He also suggested the non-revenue water be reduced from the current 32% to as low as 30%.

He said the reduction could increase the reserve margin at the treatment plant before reaching the consumers.

"They should do that — at least until the Langat 2 Project, which could supply an extra 1.13 billion litres per day to the Klang Valley residents, is ready by the latest, 2022," he said.

Earlier, the Splash buyout raised a political spat between the former federal-led Barisan Nasional and the state's Pakatan Rakyat administration which resulted in a delay in the consolidation of the Selangor water industry.

Both governments had previously failed to establish a consensus of the buying price for Splash — the last jigsaw piece in the state consolidation plan.

Splash, at that time, operated the SSP3. The concessionaire company said the explosion was due to continuous overloading of the system that caused the bursting of the surge vessel system.

Splash claimed that it had written several letters to the state government to highlight that its plants were not designed to operate beyond the design capacity on a long-term basis.

Income tax collection vital for the Malaysia we love

WHILE Malaysians have different views about the tax-filing process to where the tax money goes, one thing for sure is that "tax talk" triggers intense reactions.

In a country with about 2.27 million eligible taxpayers, the Inland Revenue Board (IRB) has identified that income tax is the largest component of the nation's revenue.

Based on statistics from the Ministry of Finance, income tax contributed 42.6% to the government's coffers last year, followed by indirect tax and non-tax revenue at 22.8% and 17.2% respectively.

What are these figures telling us? Income tax is one of the important sources of revenue to the country we love. The money you pay in taxes goes to many places.

We have governments at local, state and federal levels. The federal govern-

ment adopts the principle of separation of powers under Article 127 of the Federal Constitution. It has three branches — namely executive, legislative and judiciary.

On the other hand, the state governments also have their respective executive and legislative bodies.

The civil servants' salaries come from taxes.

The amount collected from income tax, along with other taxes and revenue, would be used to run the country and to give back to the society.

In short, taxes shift resources from individuals to the government to facilitate spending on public infrastructures.

Paying your income tax is also deemed as an expression of our shared citizenship and mutual responsibility.

Taxes put out fires, keep our streets safe, provide our children with educa-

tion, provide our families with health care, ensure our food and water are safe, create legal safeguards for businesses and employees, and many more.

In other words, taxes provide us benefits every hour of the day, every day of the year.

A total of three million eligible recipients of Bantuan Sara Hidup (BSH) or Cost of Living Aid are enjoying financial assistance from the government.

BSH offers aid between RM500 and RM1,000, as well as RM120 for each child aged 18 and below (limited to four children), to applicants with a household income of RM4,000 and below.

The money used for the BSH payouts are sourced from tax revenue and have been helpful to the low-income groups.

What if I fail to pay my income tax?

Paying your taxes is considered a civic duty although it is required by the law.

You will face penalties such as fines or imprisonment, if you do not pay your taxes.

Taxpayers who failed to pay their income taxes include individuals, companies and organisations that own extraordinary amount of property and wealth, but failed to declare their assets.

To attract this group of taxpayers, the Special Programme on Voluntary Disclosure was introduced following the 2019 budget announcement by Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng on Nov 2 last year.

This programme is part of the government's efforts in tax reformation to encourage taxpayers to make voluntary disclosure in reporting their income, as well as to increase tax col-

lection for the country's development.

The voluntary disclosure can be made at the nearest IRB office from Nov 3, 2018, to Sept 30 this year.

Members of the public can make voluntary disclosure in reporting their full income and paying taxes within the stipulated period. The voluntary disclosed information will be accepted in good faith.

With this programme, the taxpayers would enjoy a lower penalty rate of 10% when payment is made on or before July 1 this year. However, a penalty rate of 15% will apply for payment made on or before Oct 1.

Members of the public with enquiries on income tax can visit the nearest IRB offices or contact HASiL Care Line at 1800 88 5436. Alternatively, they can send their feedback via the board's website at www.hasil.gov.my. — TMR