

TUESDAY MARCH 13, 2012

Dam's safety under threat - By MOHD FARHAAN SHAH farhaan@thestar.com.my

LABIS: Farmers have encroached into the Bekok Dam, posing a threat to the water catchment area and contaminating the reservoir with chemicals. State Drainage and Irrigation Department director Chong Chee Han said the long-standing issue had become the main focus for the state government, as the dam served close to half a million people. He pointed out that the state secretary had called for a meeting with relevant agencies to tackle the issue. "The state government will gazette the Bekok Dam as a water catchment area soon to make sure there is no more encroachment," he said.



Cause of worry: The site of the Bekok Dam in Labis, Johor. The chemicals, including fertilisers and diesel-powered machinery, are used to plant crops in the area near the dam. This poses a threat as the chemicals will be absorbed into the soil or washed into the dam during a downpour. **Chong also said the 2008 Auditor-General's Report had stated that there was rampant encroachment by plantations and farmers into the Bekok Dam and that vast tracks of land around catchment areas, totalling almost 100,000ha, had yet to be gazetted.** Syarikat Air Johor Holdings

(SAJ) Sdn Bhd corporate communication manager Jamaluddin Jamil said it had taken measures to ensure the water was safe for consumption.



Dr Wee showing a picture of the site which is being encroached by farmers.

"However, SAJ may face problems in the future if the encroachment and pollution continue to contaminate the water at the dam," he said. State Water Regulatory Authority director Idris Kaparawi said water quality at 15 dams state-wide was acceptable according to World Health Organisation and Health Ministry guidelines. "The authorities have carried out regular checks at all dams in the state where we have found nothing," he said. Meanwhile, Ayer Hitam MP Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong said he had informed Mentri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman about the matter and urged the state and federal governments to take immediate action. He added that 500,000 users might face health risks, including cancer, if steps were not taken quickly to stop the encroachment. "At

the moment, there is only one security guard on duty at the Bekok Dam, which is almost the size of Singapore, in an eight-hour shift in two sessions. "One security guard is not enough to guard the area and stop encroachment," he said.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 21, 2012

No officials held responsible for mismanaging funds - At the Dewan Rakyat

NO minister, deputy minister or official has been held responsible for mismanagement of funds and not meeting the ministries target as highlighted in the **Auditor-General's Report 2010**, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. He said following the report, the Public Service Department (PSD) director-general issued a letter to all secretaries-general of ministries, heads of department and state secretaries dated Nov 22 last year, to take appropriate steps on all issues brought up. "That includes taking action against officers who are involved," he said in a written reply to Fong Po Kuan (DAP-Batu Gajah). On another matter, Najib, who is also Finance Minister, said RM19.5mil was allocated to repair roads in Kuala Lumpur last year. This is a decline from the RM30mil allocated in 2010, he said in a written reply to Teresa Kok (DAP-Seputeh).