

Governor assures tap water safe from E. coli

Jakarta Governor Fauzi Bowo assured residents on Friday that the capital's tap water was safe from Escherichia coli (E. coli) bacteria contamination.

Fauzi said that all water distributed by the city water companies was treated and tested to ensure it met standards.

"City-owned water company PAM Jaya and private operators PT PAM Lyonnaise Jaya [Palyja] and PT Aetra regularly take random samples of distributed water. The results have always been good," the governor announced at City Hall.

Earlier this week, Bekasi Environmental Agency found a high level of E. coli contamination in the neighboring Bekasi River.

Bekasi water company PT Tirta Bhagasasi also reported that the water distributed by the company, sourced from the Bekasi River, was contaminated with the bacteria.

The local company also claimed that the bacteria had also contaminated water in Jakarta.

Responding to the company's statement, Fauzi said: "Even if the water did indeed contain the bacteria, we can reassure people that the water is treated before being distributed."

Palyja spokesperson Meyritha Maryanie said that her company abided by the prevailing regulation on healthy water criteria.

"We used chlorine to rid the water of bacteria," she said.

Separately, Aetra spokesman Joshua L. Tobing also said his company tested its water prior to distributing it.

Tirta Bhagasasi director Wahyu Prihantono said Thursday that according to samples taken by the Health Ministry to test the level of E. coli bacteria in the Bekasi River six months ago, contamination was much higher than the accepted level.

The maximum level of E-coli contamination in the water is 100,000 E. coli per liter.

Wahyu said sewage trucks often dumped their loads into the Bekasi River and the Cileungsi River in eastern Jakarta .

Jakarta's main river, the Ciliwung, was listed as the most polluted river in the country by the Environment Ministry last year, with 110 million E. coli bacteria per liter of water in the downstream area.

Millions of people live along its banks and depend on its water for washing and bathing.