

River of Life project flowing with benefits

PM: It will create jobs and improve economic activities in KL

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THE River of Life (RoL) project will increase the quality of life in Kuala Lumpur and make it one of the top 20 cities in the world to live in, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"The RoL project is one of the government's efforts to transform Kuala Lumpur's landscape to be a top liveable city and its citizens experiencing high quality of life," he said.

"The project is a high-impact project. An estimated 27,500 jobs will be created when the project is completed with the increase of econom-

ic activities along the river," he said in a recent post on his blog at www.najibrazak.com

Najib added that when the project started in 2011, the quality of the river water was Class III to IV (defined as not safe for body contact).

"This will change in 2020, when the quality of water will be improved to Class IIB (defined as safe for recreational purposes)," he said.

Stakeholders concurred that the value of properties in the area would increase, adding that there would be more activities around the river that would attract more tourism to the city.



Najib (right) visiting the RoL project site at Masjid Jamek. With him is Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar (left).

Malaysian Institute of Estate Agents Erick YT Kho said if a river was dead, real estate around it would also die.

"A polluted and smelly river is dangerous to us.

"No one will want to be near it," he said, adding that townships in the past were built around rivers as that was how life began.

"It provided water supply and was an important form of transportation," he said.

Citing Singapore's Clarke Quay as an example, Kho said life kick-started there after the riverside was cleaned up.

"Hotels and restaurants started building up around it and there are

city tours on the river using water taxis," he said, adding that it also became a major tourist destination.

Kho, however, called on the authorities to maintain the cleanliness of the river and monitor waste disposal into the river by surrounding projects.

As a practising architect for the past 35 years and past president of the Malaysian Institute of Architects, Saifuddin Ahmad said most great cities in Europe such as Amsterdam and Prague were developed around rivers which were major mode of transportation.

"Although the river in Kuala Lumpur is not as wide as the riv-

ers in those countries, the RoL is a positive initiative by the government.

"Once you create public spaces for the community around the river, you are giving life to the perimeter around it.

"People can converge there during their free time and weekends and this what RoL is all about," he said.

He said any future developments along the river in Kuala Lumpur and especially upstream, needs to be considered carefully.

"Certain activities should not be allowed there such as factories.

"Authorities must think twice before approving projects."