



Oil palm trees planted close to the edge of the river at a tributary of the Kinabatangan. Fertiliser run-off is polluting the river and endangering the lives of people living along the Kinabatangan.

Stubborn oil palm plantations warned

■ **By Jaswinder Kaur**
jaswin@nst.com.my

KOTA KINABALU: Only a handful of oil palm plantations in the Kinabatangan district have restored riparian reserves, a fact that has irked Kinabatangan MP Datuk Bung Moktar Radin.

He said although the Kinabatangan district office had issued a notice to 300 plantations three months ago, only five per cent, or 15, had responded.

"If the situation does not improve, then I will call for a meeting by February, and I will ask non-governmental organisations and related government agencies to help cut oil palm at riparian reserves.

"These plantations are only thinking of profit, and not about the pollution they are causing to the Kinabatangan river due to fertiliser run-off," Bung Moktar said.

The Kinabatangan is the longest river in Sabah, spanning

NSF 18/12

560km from the highlands to the Sulu Sea.

"People who live along the Kinabatangan are exposed to dangers such as poisoning," said Bung Moktar. "Their catch of prawns and fish has dwindled."

He said this after participating in a tree-planting exercise on Saturday at Lot 8 of the fragmented Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, on Sabah's east coast.

Some 300 people joined hands to plant 2,000 seedlings in an effort to restore damaged riparian reserves.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman had in May ordered the Drainage and Irrigation Department and the Land and Surveys Department to monitor riparian reserves, and make sure such zones were either kept pristine or restored if they had been cultivated by plantation owners.

The length of a riparian reserve depends on the size and importance of a particular river.