

Control pollution at the source

YOUR report "Bacteria to bring life back to river" about the pollution of Sungai Petani (NST, Jan 22) brings back fond memories of the first river-pollution project when I was a Form Four student at SM Sains Kedah (renamed SM Tengku Mohd Jiwa) in 1975.

The team had five members guided by our chemistry teacher, an Englishman called Thorpe. The study was supported by Esso under the programme called EssoTaps.

Now, 32 years later, the river is as polluted as ever and, even worse, as the population within the watershed grew.

The statement by the Kedah Works, Energy and the Environment Committee chairman Datuk Nawawi Ahmad that Sungai Petani would be

teeming with aquatic life again by just seeding the river with bacteria is misleading.

The technology promoted by Japanese and Korean researchers is technically sound as the special bacteria increased the assimilative capacity of the river, but without controlling the pollution at the source at the same time — by constructing sewers, sewage treatment plants and enforcement to stop illegal discharge of industrial effluents — all the efforts would come to nought.

The RM5 million project will just be another waste of public funds.

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The idea of seeding a river with bacteria to restore aquatic life will come to nought if pollution is not checked.