

Waterway clean-up

1 State, 1 River programme showing good results

By A. Azim Idris

abdulazim@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: People are throwing alarming quantities of rubbish into rivers, despite the millions of ringgit spent on rehabilitation and awareness programmes, said the Department of Irrigation and Drainage.

Its director-general, Datuk Ahmad Husaini Sulaiman, said of the 10,000 tonnes of rubbish generated a day, 10 per cent ended up in waterways, which comprised 12,187 streams and tributaries flowing into 189 main river basins.

Describing the volume as “shocking”, he said rubbish was just one part of river pollutants.

Others included treated and untreated wastewater discharged by factories and industrial sites, sewage treatment plants, organic waste from commercial outlets, household oil and grease, he added.

Husaini told the *New Straits Times* that based on the department’s monitoring of major rivers between 2007 and 2009, the number of clean river basins had dropped from 91 to 70.

TURN TO **PG 12, COL 3**

Rehabilitation programmes showing results



The 1 State, 1 River programme focuses on improving bad river stretches to turn them into rivers that can support human activity. — File picture

□ FROM PAGE 1

The number of slightly polluted rivers had increased from 45 to 64, he said.

"This indicates that there is a constant decline in water quality in rivers."

Wastewater from factories, treatment plants, illegal workshops, food premises, wetmarkets and squatters were the main polluters, he added.

"The contamination of rivers disrupt clean water supply, which leads to poor health and affect sources of income for many. This is detrimental to the economy."

On a brighter note, Husaini said

several rivers had shown immense improvement after the department changed tactics and started the 1 State, 1 River programme a few years ago.

The programme focuses on improving bad river stretches, such as Km12 of Sungai Pechala in Kuala Lumpur-Selangor, Km3.1 of Sungai Petani in Kedah and Km12 of Sungai Pinang in Penang.

Perlis DID chose Dataran Pengkalan Asam and Kangar River Front as inner-city recreational sites with Sungai Perlis as the centre-piece.

Perak DID focuses on Sungai Kinta and building a rubber dam.

Since improving the nation's waterways was about celebrating life, Husaini said human activities were the focal point of the programme.

It seeks to raise the water-quality rating from Class IV (not suitable for body contact) to Class IIb (suitable for body-contact and recreational use) by 2015.

"Through the cooperation of other agencies, non-governmental organisations, communities and schools, we are confident that we can meet this goal."

He said each state DID developed its own plan of action as the circumstances surrounding each of the 14 rivers were different.