

'Green' batik now in vogue

The batik-making craft uses an age-old traditional process which produces wastewater that is harmful to our rivers. However, a batik maker is joining the green revolution by making an effort to prevent the pollution, writes
A. AZIM IDRIS

HIS factory was once a prime river polluter, but now, a local batik maker has gone eco-friendly while saving thousands of ringgit monthly by recycling the wax used to form his designs.

Thanks to the state Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID), Mohd Shafie Mohd Ali, whose factory is beside Sungai Hiliran in Kampung Cabang Tiga, Losong, Kuala Terengganu, has installed a tank that filters wax and glue discharged from the factory.

This allows the 40-year-old to reuse crucial, yet contaminating, elements to make his batik textile.

Shafie, who has been running the factory for the past 10 years, said although he was initially sceptical about the tank, he was persuaded to halt operations for a week to allow contractors to do installation work three years ago.

"Stopping operations for a week would have been disastrous as I was making a small profit, yet I had to pay the workers' salaries," he told the *New Straits Times* at his factory.

"I relented because the department was generous enough to install it for free and taught me how I would benefit from the tank."

The batik maker, who has 18 years experience under his belt, said he saved between RM3,000 and RM4,000 in the purchase of wax and resin adhesive a month.



Mohd Shafie Mohd Ali showing how recycled wax is used in making batik.— NST pictures by Aswadi Alias

"I only use 30 per cent of new wax and resin to mix with the old ones in each cycle," he said.

Shafie's business has been thriving in recent years as he had earned a reputation for making the *Batik Mable* and *Batik Pelangi* designs that are popular in Terengganu. (*Batik Pelangi* refers to rainbow colours while *Batik Mable* uses subtle colours.)

He said a typical batik cloth — branded as Izzati Batik — took

three days to process and costs between RM25 and RM35, while customised designs would cost more.

The entrepreneur also felt that he could produce less contaminated wastewater by using eco-friendly dye.

"That is why I look forward to attending courses that the DID organises."

State DID director Mat Hussin Ghani said the batik factory was one out of hundreds of buildings that his department worked with in the fight to improve the water quality of Sungai Hiliran.

The river was selected as a focus for the national "1 State, 1 River" rehabilitation programme.

Mat Hussin said the installation of a tank costs around RM1,500.

However, the director said, his department found the task of installing tanks challenging as the village-styled houses in Losong were in close proximity to each other.

"But overall, we have seen a huge improvement in water quality of the river — from fully polluted to partially polluted.

"We use to find market waste, along with garbage, but now the river is clear and is beginning to show signs of life."

“I RELENTED BECAUSE THE DEPARTMENT WAS GENEROUS ENOUGH TO INSTALL IT FOR FREE AND TAUGHT ME HOW I WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE TANK.”

— Mohd Shafie Mohd Ali

Mohd Shafie Mohd Ali removing wax from a tank that filters wastewater discharged by his batik factory.



Sungai Hiliran cleaner under the 1 State, 1 River rehabilitation programme.