

Caring for our rivers

The installation of rubbish traps in the city's rivers has helped reduce pollution, however, government agencies continue efforts to improve the quality of water. >2&3



No easy task

A contractor is seen raking the litter trapped in a floating boom installed in Sungai Batu near Kampung Simpang Batu, Kuala Lumpur.
— By AZMAN GHANI / The Star



Cleaner: The downstream of Sungai Batu, which appears clear of litter since the floating boom was placed in the upstream.

Cleaner rivers in Greater KL

DBKL: Rubbish traps have helped reduce pollution in city

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Photos by AZMAN GHANI

IMPROVING the water quality of rivers has been the Government's focus under the River Of Life (ROL) project, the fifth of the Entry Point Projects (EPP) for the Greater Kuala Lumpur/Klang Valley under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP).

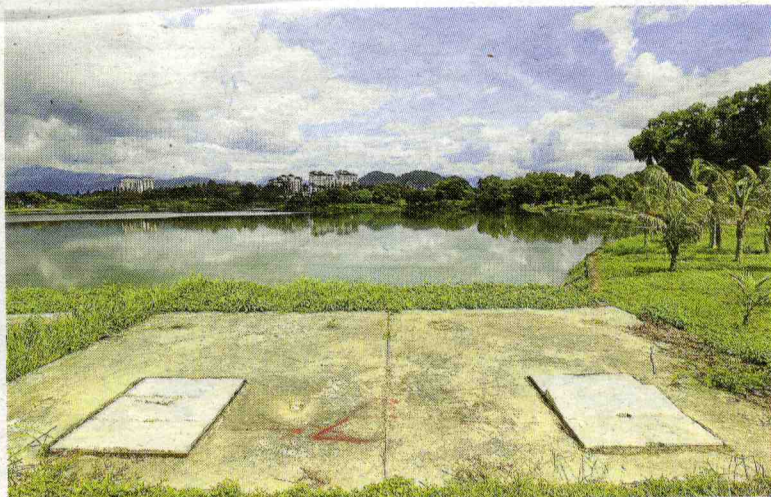
The EPP that aims to transform the Klang River into a vibrant and liveable waterfront with high economic value is divided into three components — river cleaning, river

beautification and land development.

Studies showed that the river basins considered to be polluted or "dead" in 1997 had been reduced from 25 to 14 (in 2002) and nine (in 2003).

The installation of rubbish traps in rivers by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) since 2008 has helped reduce pollution of the river in the city.

DBKL Civil Engineering and Drainage Department director Tan Keng Chok said under the ROL Project, RM10.6mil was spent by the Federal Government to install 124



Rubbish trap: DBKL manages a gross pollutant trap in this flood retention pond located near PPR Intan Baiduri, Kepong.

Estimated weight of various rubbish traps



Rubbish traps	Unit	Quantity (tonnes/day)	Percentage occurrence (%)	Weight (tonnes/day)
Floating booms	14	1.0	70	9.8
Static screens	71	0.10	70	5.0
GPT/ CDS	22	0.10	70	1.5
Refuse chamber	21	0.25	70	3.7
Total weight of river trash				20.0

Source: DBKL

additional rubbish traps and another RM3mil yearly to maintain and remove floating rubbish from the traps.

He said DBKL had appointed a consultant to study, survey and suggest the best areas to install rubbish traps.

"Currently, 128 rubbish traps have been installed, mostly in the tributaries upstream of Klang River. Under the ROL Project, 48 rubbish traps will be replaced and another 76 new traps are scheduled to be installed by this year.

"DBKL currently manages Klang River (16.5km), Gombak River (8.2km) and Batu River (8.1km), which fall under the main rivers category.

"Under the category of large rivers, there are eight, totalling 40.6km," said Tan during an inter-

view, adding that it also manages 15 small rivers measuring 49.2km and 13 flood retention ponds.

Thirteen more flood retention ponds are being managed by the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID).

Tan said the rubbish traps are in the form of log booms (floating booms), static screens, gross pollutant traps and refuse chambers, and these are manufactured locally.

"Static screens are installed in main drains to filter litter and prevent pollution of rivers.

"Under the ROL project, waste water treatment plants are also being planned for five wet markets in the city. The solid waste from wet markets will be trapped at the static screen inlet chambers and removed

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Eyesore: A floating boom in Sungai Gombak near Kampung Padang Balang in Gombak. Litter is being raked to a section specially built to contain rubbish.

More can be done with the right mindset

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periodically," he said.

Tan said 20 tonnes of litter was collected every day and this does not include water hyacinth (better known as *kiambang*) from flood retention ponds.

"However, this can increase up to 40 tonnes when it rains heavily and cleaning is difficult.

"It is important that the rubbish traps are cleaned frequently so that it will not disrupt the flow of the river or main drain channels," said Tan, adding that 340 tonnes of water hyacinth was collected every year from flood retention ponds.

He said the ROL project aimed to improve the river now classified as Class III-Class IV (not suitable for body contact) water quality to Class IIb (suitable for recreation) by the year 2020.

"To-date, 46 work packages for river cleaning works are at various stages of implementation by different government agencies and ministries.

"Of these, eight have already been completed and 23 are under way.

"ROL river cleaning initiatives include utilisation of retention ponds and construction of River Water Treatment Plants to remove pollutants from river water.

"The river cleaning works have exceeded its Key Performance Index (KPI) of 15% completion with 19% completion in 2011," he said, adding that the collection of litter from rubbish traps was currently outsourced to 30 contractors engaged by DBKL.

On the contractors' performance, Tan said DBKL was constantly monitoring them.

"They have specific times to collect litter upstream and it is usually done before mid-day.

"Our officers conduct spot checks regularly and when we receive complaints, we act immediately."

On whether the rubbish traps were in working condition due to the foul stench at a flood retention pond in PPR Intan Baiduri, Kepong and based on complaints from residents living near Sungai Belongkong in Jalan Gombak and Sungai Jinjang in Jinjang, Tan said DBKL was doing

We are urging MNCs and NGOs to adopt rivers.

— DATUK AHMAD PHESAL TALIB



Lumpur has increased significantly over the years and rubbish is thrown into drains.

"People generally throw all kinds of things into drains and rivers such as plastic bottles, polystyrene food containers and even furniture and mattresses.

"We must show them how polluted the rivers are and they should be educated about the consequences. This is the only way to change their mindset.

"Water can be treated but this is a costly process. When people learn to value rivers as a vital water source, only then we will see change," Tan said.

Meanwhile, Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Ahmad Phesal Talib said people's mindset should change.

"We are fighting a losing battle if this does not happen.

"We are urging multinational companies and non-governmental organisations to participate in river restoration projects by adopting rivers.

"With the right mindset, people can do so much more," he said.

its best to ensure these were being managed properly.

"However, let us look into the root cause of the problem.

"The rubbish traps can only remove floating rubbish but pollutants are from incoming drains and sillage which may originate from nearby houses, markets, food courts, restaurants, workshops and even industries," Tan added.

He said in developed countries, food wastes are recycled by composting and turning them into fertiliser and animal feed.

"Here, we just dispose of them. The number of food stalls in Kuala