

# Wash away the bad reputation

Take ownership and keep rivers clean, communities urged

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**M**ENTION Sungai Bunus and the images of flashfloods and rubbish comes to mind.

This is the perception that the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) wants to change.

The department's newly appointed River Basin and Management director Datuk Hanapi Mohamad Noor wants to change the way city folk view Sungai Bunus and educate people to embrace the rivers of their city.

"It is sad that people look at this gentle river as a polluted water source that causes massive floods.

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"It certainly was not like that 40 years ago. It was clean and pristine and a place where the community had a lot of fun fishing and bathing.

"We must change all of that. We must take ownership of our rivers, not just here but everywhere because it is one of the city's most precious assets," he added.

Hanapi, who attended a *gotong royong* session in Taman Sungai

Bonus on Saturday, said the department planned to offer incentives to communities living near rivers to urge them to adopt the rivers.

"We used to do this before, but for now, we may revive the adoption campaign, particularly in areas where River of Life projects are being carried out."

The *gotong royong* is a community outreach programme under the tagline *Sungai Untuk Kehidupan Anda*, or *Suka*, to encourage and educate people to love their river.

More than 100 people comprising residents and students from the nearby Kolej Vokasional Setapak took part in the clean-up exercise along Sungai Bonus.

The effort involved government agencies such as Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and Alam Flora.

"In the 1960s, I used to bathe in Sungai Bonus. It was that clean," said Razak Abdul Karim.

The 63-year-old community leader said the river was a meeting point for the community to have picnics and play in the evenings.

"To see the river turned into a rubbish dump today is just so sad," he said.

Kolej Vokasional Setapak director Ruslan Zainudin said 30 of his students had helped out in the *gotong royong*.

"It is crucial that we involve the young people and it is better to involve them at home or school.

"It is the only way to keep the effort sustainable," he said.

*StarMetro* had reported that Sungai Bonus, a tributary of Sungai Kelang, was one of the most polluted rivers

in the city.

The river is categorised as Class IV-V. Class I is pristine and suitable for drinking while Class IV and V refers to rivers that are very polluted and not suitable for bodily contact or recreation purposes.

The main culprits contributing to the pollution of Sungai Bonus, according to studies by the DID, were those who lived and worked nearby the area.

These include the local communities, restaurant operators, workshops, wet and night markets, as well as, street hawkers, institutions, industries, corporations and developers who discharge waste into the river.

According to a DID study, about 500 tonnes of waste is disposed of daily into the Bonus basin alone.



**Getting all involved:** Hanapi (fourth from right) is accompanied by community leaders as he inspects Sungai Bonus after the clean-up exercise.