

# Solution lies in a new approach



More than half the 400 rivers in Malaysia are polluted, according to the Drainage and Irrigation Department and the Department of Environment.

## The rivers continue to die

**SEAL'S EYE** In an unprovoked assault, a 100g toad was thrown into the Sungai Pinang river in Penang. He said this in 2002 when he was deputy prime minister. Now, the toad probably would not last two seconds. For, after 13 years and millions of ringgit, as **MURRIS ISHAK** and **NISHA SABANAYAGAM** discover, the 'Love Our River' campaign has sunk.

### The NST report on Oct 30.

duce the pollution level as well as be the watchdog to prevent industries from polluting the rivers around residential areas.

This has been proven in many countries in Europe, the United States, Japan, the Philippines and India.

Efforts by government agencies have proven to be unsustainable. It is time for us to take a different approach.

The new approach should

emphasise not only raising awareness but also educating and training specific groups on the negative contribution of their daily activities to the rivers, the health implications and water scarcity problems which will haunt the public because of the polluted rivers.

**MARIMUTHU NADASON**  
President, Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations

THE rivers of Malaysia are in an alarming state. Although 97 per cent of the country's water supply is channelled from approximately 35,000km of rivers, our rivers continue to die ("R.I.P. Rivers in peril" — NST, Oct 30).

Many reasons have been highlighted, such as lack of enforcement, loopholes in the existing environmental laws and regulations and shortage of funds. However, the need for a communal approach is vital to handle this situation.

The "Love Our River" campaign was carried out to create public awareness.

One of the reasons for the

failure of the campaign is its approach.

It is not possible to create public awareness only by putting up billboards, carrying out landscaping activities and conducting seminars in schools.

The culprits — people involved in wet markets, landfills, slaughterhouses, squatters, industries and old houses — should be educated on the impact of river pollution to water resources and their own health.

Rather than emphasising the landscaping activities, the government should emphasise proper channelling of the

kitchen waste to prevent the non-biodegradable detergent, waste oil and chemicals used in households from flowing into the drains, which end up in rivers.

Educating the public on the harm caused by these materials in relation to their own safety, health and environment will help reduce river pollution.

Fomca (Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations) strongly believes that public involvement in river rehabilitation is most vital.

Public participation will ensure the success of river rehabilitation as they can help re-