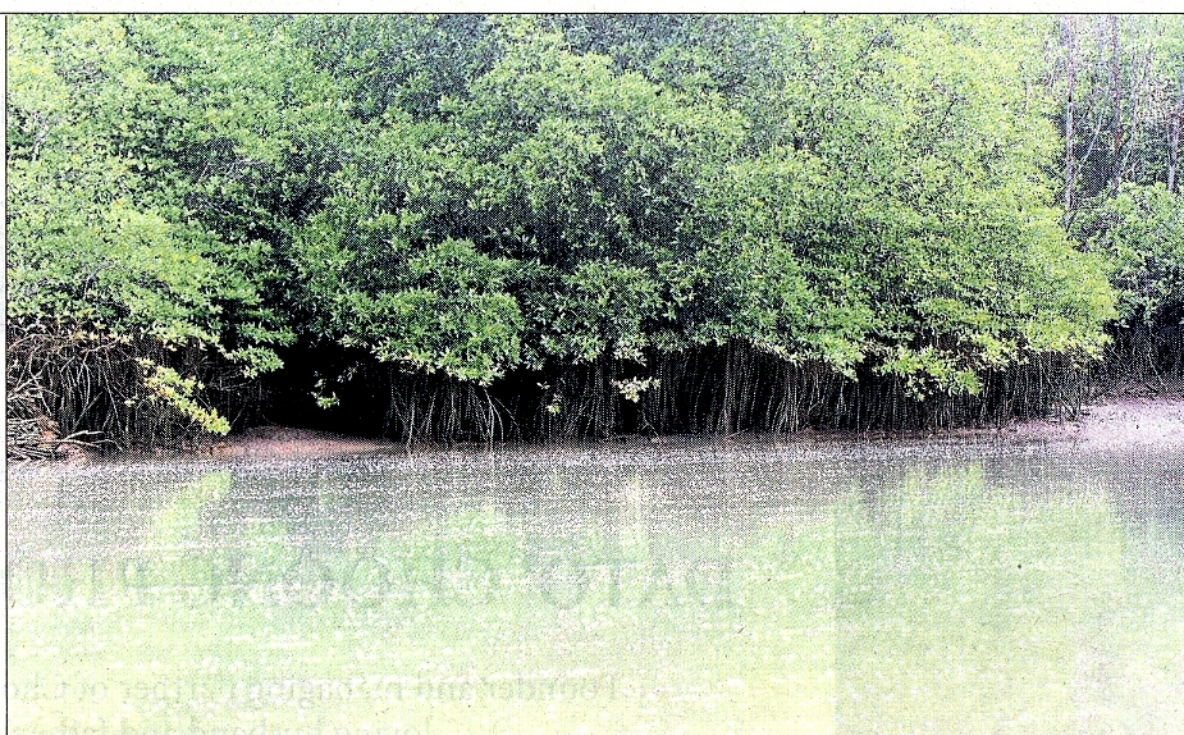




Keep rivers clean

MALAYSIANS today are used to getting clean water the moment we turn on the tap. This has caused us to gradually forget the importance of the source of this water – our rivers.

In April alone, there were several cases of pollution of our rivers such as the oil spills in the Johor River and the pollution of Sungai Semenyih which had caused multiple water disruptions.

These were not accidents but were caused by irresponsible parties who dumped their waste into the rivers.

Perhaps they wanted to save cost, or they felt it was too troublesome to dispose their waste properly.

If we look at the big picture, the cost these irresponsible parties can save is miniscule compared to the cost suffered by society as a whole. Yet, they do not see this.

When our rivers, the source of our water are polluted, our water treatment plants will be affected.

If the pollution levels are high enough, it can even cause the treatment plants to shut down. This means that you would not be getting water in your homes.

This has happened many times over the years, so you cannot say

that the cleanliness of the rivers is not our concern.

Many of us have experienced the effects of these water disruptions. Shops have stayed closed, bottled water sold out everywhere and many of our daily activities come to a halt.

Life comes to a standstill for a few days, all because someone polluted our rivers.

Water is very important, but many of us are not cherishing it since it is cheap and can easily be obtained. The water disruptions help to remind us of the importance of water, but only for a short time.

One may think that with the high rainfall, we might never run out of water. Think carefully, will the rain always fall into our dams?

In the end, the rain will go into our rivers before we collect it. Therefore, no matter how much rain we get, it makes no difference because the water is still polluted.

We can only use and drink clean water, so if our rivers are dirty, the amount of clean water we get might actually be less despite our high rainfall.

The problems are expected to become even more serious with

our impending dry season. This is because when the water levels in the rivers are reduced, even a little pollution can cause the concentration levels of the pollutants to become too high, and consequently cause water treatment plants to close.

As long as nothing is done to protect our rivers, our water supply will always be in danger.

Currently, we are unable to achieve this as there are no clear rights to the river and the land around it. How much effort do we see being put into river protection?

Situations like this are allowed to go on because people do not care enough about our rivers, and this makes it appear as if there are no problems.

The first step to solve such a problem is to realise how important the river actually is. Simply informing and reminding the people around you about the current situation of our rivers would be a huge step forward.

Let us all play our part in protecting the environment.

NAH KOK WAI
Research and Policy Executive
Forum Air Malaysia