

Yahya wants committee to monitor Petagas River

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PUTATAN: Deputy Chief Minister, Datuk Yahya Hussin wants a special committee to monitor Sungai Petagas to ensure that it is clean.

He said it will also help to increase public awareness on the importance of their role in keeping the river clean at all times.

"I have suggested it to the District Officer to form a committee to monitor Sungai Petagas and other rivers in the district.

"Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has already given their commitment to help us improve Sungai Petagas as well as other rivers in Sabah," he said.

Yahya was speaking to reporters after officiating at the Tiger Prawn Improvement and Rehabilitation Programme which also aimed to create public awareness on the importance of Sungai Petagas, held at the Kampung Petagas community hall here yesterday.

Those present were the director of the Borneo Marine Research Institute for UMS, Prof. Dr. Saleem Mustafa, Sungao Petagas Community Project Leader, Prof. Datin Seri Panglima Dr. Ann Anton, Putatan District Officer, Ag. Abd. Ghani Pg. Yusoff, Director of the Fisheries Department, Rayner S. Galid and local residents of Kampung Petagas.

Yahya who is also the Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry as well as the assemblyman for Petagas, noted that the level of public awareness on river protection is still low.

"We see the river is still dirty and there are rubbish and wastes strewn all over the river-

banks. Some irresponsible quarters even dispose industrial waste into Sungai Petagas. It appears as though the river has become a convenient dumping ground for villagers and even the factories.

"We get information that at night and early morning, lorries carrying garbage and industrial waste come to dispose the items into the river and this has badly polluted the river," he said.

Putatan which now has a population of more than 50,000 is rapidly growing and that growth has affected the function and condition of Sungai Petagas.

Yahya recalled that some 40 years ago, the river was a source of livelihood for fishermen and its clean water was a main supply to the residents.

However, the Department of Environment found that the quality of water in Sungai Petagas was deteriorating due to domestic waste such as plastic bags and bottles which caused adverse effects to the aquatic life in the river.

"I hope that the programme to improve and rehabilitate aquatic resource in the river between the district office and UMS will transform and enhance the socio-economy of the local community while improving the quality of the river water," said Yahya.

He believed that once the river has been rehabilitated, it will have the potential to be developed as an area for eco-tourism.

The programme is the second phase of an initiative to improve the fish stock in the river after the first one was implemented last 23 April.

Yahya also distributed prawn and fish fries to 10 villages in the Petagas constituency.



Yahya on Thursday points at a signboard indicating the first phase of a project to improve fish stock in Petagas River that was implemented last 23 April.