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National river authority gets Cabinet's nod

Radzi Sapiee

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Cabinet has approved the setting up of a national river authority to undertake the task of overseeing the cleanliness, maintenance and beautification of the country's waterways and promote tourism.

Such efforts have been successfully carried out by similar authorities in Britain (the Thames River) and Europe (the Danube).

The Agriculture Ministry, entrusted with the task of setting up the authority, has instructed the Drainage and Irrigation Department to prepare a working paper on the matter, including matters relating to State jurisdiction.

Agriculture Minister Datuk Amar Sulaiman Daud said the setting up of the national river authority had received Cabinet approval last month and had been advocated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"I have discussed this with the Prime Minister during a meeting on Wednesday and he has given consent to proceed with the setting up of the authority," he said in a telephone interview today.

However the formation of the authority will take some time as some matters - including implementation and State matters - have to be studied first.

Dr Sulaiman said since rivers are under State jurisdiction, State regulations had to be taken into account and the State Governments had to be consulted.

"We hope to put up a proposal to Parliament in three months' time, which upon approval will be referred to all Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers."

He said the DID had chosen the Sungei Selangor, its tributaries and vicinities including any nearby mining ponds and factories as a case study to be applied to other rivers.

The DID is finding ways to clean the river, taking into account factors like pollution, silting and erosion, that can later be implemented on all rivers nationwide.

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