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Sungai Sepang pollution `not caused by peat`

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Peat soil is not the cause of the Sungai Sepang pollution, experts said today.

Peat swamps, they said, may turn water brownish-black but they are not to be blamed for the pollution of Sungai Sepang, one of the most polluted rivers in the country.

On Monday, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar had said that the pollution of Sungai Sepang was due to peat soil conditions.

It was Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who had earlier spotted the "black river" when the plane he was in flew over the area.

Malaysia Nature Society scientific officer Herman Bernard said peat did not cause pollution but actually helped improve water condition.

"Peat releases minerals in the water which is good for exotic fishes," he said.

"Peat swamps have a complete ecosystem of its own and to blame it for the pollution of the Sepang River is simply unfair."

World Wide Fund For Nature Malaysia science officer Mohamad Nasir Abdul Salam said there must be other factors that contributed to the pollution, particularly the pig farming activities in the Negri Sembilan side of the river.

"We have to wait for the DOE report on the river to see if the pollution level has decreased since they stopped pig farming there," he said.

"That is more likely the cause, not so much peat soil."

Universiti Putra Malaysia Department of Environmental Science lecturer Professor Mohd Kamil Yusof said it was natural for the river water to turn teh tarik brown or black when it passes through peat.

"But it's not toxic," he confirmed.

State Unity and Community Development and Science, Technology and Environment Committee chairman Datuk Ch'ng Toh Eng was to submit a report on the cause of the pollution.

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