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Law-Rivers

KEY RIVERS TO BE REHABILITATED UNDER EIGHTH MALAYSIA PLAN

SHAH ALAM, Oct 21 (Bernama) -- Rivers that are important to state governments for water supply and other economic activities will be rehabilitated under the Eighth Malaysia Plan (RMK8) which begins next year.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said the ministry would implement the rehabilitation programme nationwide, and an initial allocation for it was expected under next year's Budget.

"The programme will specifically concentrate on rehabilitating rivers that are considered beneficial to the people, like being the main source of drinking water supply," he told a news conference after launching the national-level Environmental Week celebration here today.

Law represented Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the launch and delivered his own speech.

He said at least one river in each state would be rehabilitated and state governments had been asked to identify them.

The rivers earmarked for rehabilitation can be the most polluted, moderately polluted or unpolluted ones but must fulfil the main criterion of being vital to the people's well-being.

Law said one-third of the 120 main rivers in the country were highly polluted while the rest were categorised as either moderately polluted or clean and unpolluted.

River rehabilitation was a long process and had to be tackled with concerted efforts from all concerned, including the government and people, he said.

Law said among the main causes of river pollution were industrial activities, land clearing, livestock farming and mushrooming of squatters along river banks.

He urged state governments to translate their river rehabilitation pledges into action not only to rehabilitate polluted rivers but also to safeguard rivers that are still clean and unpolluted.

In his speech, Law said environmental issues have become a global problem which can only be solved with the cooperation of all.

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Mohd Khir Toyo said in his speech that the state government was preparing a blueprint to be used as a guide for environmental management.

-- BERNAMA

KM YBY