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Love our rivers, Dr M advises

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ALOR STAR, Fri. - Irresponsible behaviour by people who treat rivers as rubbish dumps has caused some rivers to be polluted to the extent they can no longer be cleaned.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said they should not have such an attitude as rivers played an important role.

"Rivers are an invaluable part of our heritage and we must maintain them.

"Treat rivers like your loved ones, and ensure they are clean and beautiful always," he said, adding that clean rivers were not only for recreational purposes but could also become tourist attractions.

However, Dr Mahathir said some people fail to realise the importance of rivers and chose to treat them like open sewers.

He said the problem first started when people threw bio-degradable household items into the water.

"This was not too bad but then plastic bags and other non-biodegradable items were discarded into the rivers.

"People are now throwing old refrigerators and even unwanted vehicles ... those living along river banks also have no qualms about easing themselves in rivers.

"On top of this, some people even throw murder victims into rivers as the final resting place."

He said these were among the reasons rivers were being choked to death.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the launching of the national-level "Love Our Rivers" campaign at Ampang Jajar here.

This is the second such campaign organised by the Drainage and Irrigation Department in seven years.

It is aimed at encouraging public awareness, empathy and care towards rivers.

Apart from the continuous educational and awareness programmes, this year's campaign includes river cleaning, beautification, rehabilitation and adoption.

Dr Mahathir said people should be thankful that "our rivers have water flowing in them unlike in some countries".

Meanwhile, at a Press conference in Gurun later in the evening, Dr Mahathir said the "Love Our Rivers" campaign had attracted people's attention on the importance of keeping rivers clean.

However, he said he was not satisfied with the level of cleanliness and attitude of some people who treated rivers as rubbish dumps.

"I'm not satisfied, but we are making a little progress. People should stop throwing their rubbish into rivers ... please help us keep the rivers clean."

Dr Mahathir also said motor workshops situated along riverbanks should be relocated as they were among the main sources of pollution.

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