

Single policy for water management in Malaysia

PUTRAJAYA, 6 September 2012: There will be more co-ordinated and streamlined efforts in river rehabilitation and conservation in Malaysia with the National Water Resource Policy.

Dato' Sri Douglas Uggah Embas, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Malaysia, said the policy will co-ordinate and streamline all water-related agencies, and departments at federal and state level for a more sustainable water management programme.

"By unifying the federal government and states responsible for water, we will be able to ensure comprehensive and sustainable programmes, enabling us to meet the water requirements of a growing population while protecting our natural resources," he told reporters after officiating the National River Forum.

The National Water Resources Policy announced recently includes preserving and distributing the resources, ensuring appropriate policy and legislation as well as streamlining the institutional set-up. It also involves addressing the degrading water quality of rivers, and conserving Malaysia's rivers.

The policy is timely as it is estimated that around 50% of rivers in Malaysia are already polluted.

"While rehabilitation is possible, it is costly and we will never be able to restore the river to its original pristine state. In other words, we must move from curative to preventive approach," he also said.

He added that all parties including the private sector, NGOs and members of the public, have to assume collective responsibility for the sustainable use and management of the rivers and water resources.

"This inaugural National River Forum is a key step towards stronger public-private sector partnership in river management, and I would like to thank GAB Foundation for taking the lead. We will learn much from the sharing of best global practices today," Uggah said.

The one-day forum, with the main theme, "Sustainable River Management", brought together two local and five foreign experts who shared best practices from Malaysia, Singapore, UK, Japan, Australia and Vietnam, with more than 200 participants.

GAB Foundation Chairman, Tan Sri Saw Huat Lye said the forum marks GAB Foundation's continued commitment to expand its river rehabilitation initiatives beyond Sungei Way.

Five years ago, GAB Foundation embarked on the W.A.T.E.R Project with Global Environment Centre (GEC), and started with the river right at its backyard, the Sungei Way river. Today, the water quality has improved and biodiversity enhanced.

“We are here for the same reason, we want to be part of the solution. Each of us has a deep appreciation for our incredible natural resources. And we want to ensure that these rivers are around for the next generation.

“To ensure this happens, we need an integrated approach, sustainable programmes and community involvement. And we are hopeful that the sharing of best practices today will do exactly that – inspire, encourage and galvanize us to work cohesively and persevere in our river rehabilitation and conservation efforts,” Tan Sri Saw also said.

Director-General of the Department of Irrigation and Drainage, Datuk Ir Haji Ahmad Husaini Sulaiman said in line with the increasing emphasis given to protecting water resources, Malaysia will also be joining the global celebration of World Rivers Day in September.

“This is a first for Malaysia and the country’s celebration will be held on 20th October at Sungai Perlis. We are hopeful that the activities held during the celebrations will educate and empower Malaysians to protect their rivers,” he added.

The inaugural National River Forum is organised by GAB Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; the Department of Irrigation and Drainage, Malaysia; and Global Environment Centre.

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About GAB Foundation:

GAB Foundation was established in 2007 to carry out Guinness Anchor Berhad’s (GAB) corporate social responsibility initiatives in three core areas – environmental conservation, education and community. Within these three key areas, the Foundation strives to identify causes that not only contribute significantly to empowering and enriching the lives of deserving Malaysian individuals and communities, but also resonate with GAB’s corporate values of striving for excellence, acting with integrity and having a genuine respect for people, society and its diversity.

The management and administration of the Foundation is governed by a board of trustees made up of senior members of GAB’s management team and independent nominees.

For more information on the GAB Foundation please visit www.gabfoundation.org .