

# 'Time to introduce **green** studies in schools'

➤ Studied as a core subject, it can help address river, sea pollution, says water industry expert

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**PETALING JAYA:** Introducing environmental studies as a core subject in schools may be the only solution to overcome the issue of river and sea pollution in the country, according to a water industry expert Assoc Prof Dr Haliza Abdul Rahman (*pix*).

She said it was high time that such a subject be implemented in our education system to ensure better environmental awareness among Malaysians since it (awareness) is very low at present.

The Universiti Putra Malaysia's Environmental and Occupational Health Department lecturer said this is particularly important as the nation continues to grapple with water pollution issues despite the government's best efforts in addressing it,

including enforcement.

"The public always assumes that it is the responsibility of the government to keep rivers clean, but the fact is our environmental awareness is low and this needs to be addressed.

"We need to raise awareness through formal and informal education. Parents can play their part at home while the subject could be introduced in the curriculum by way of formal education.

"Environmental studies as a subject must be taught from pre-school to university level. It must be made a core compulsory subject for all," she said recently.

Explaining its importance, Haliza said the quality of Malaysia's river water continues to

decline with more rivers currently categorised as Class IV and V.

Rivers in the country are categorised into five classes - I, II, III, IV and V - based on the descending order of water quality, with Class I considered good and Class V the most polluted.

"The government should look at all rivers as the previous Barisan Nasional administration did with the River of Life project in Kuala Lumpur. Priority should be accorded throughout all areas of a river, be it upstream or downstream, to ensure pollution is minimised.

"Prevention is always better than cure, as the saying goes. Mitigation measures have to be put in place, as the cost to clean up a polluted river is so much more.

"Take the recent Sungai Kim Kim issue in Pasir Gudang, Johor for example. The government had to allocate RM6.4 million to clean it. So priority for all rivers should be the same regardless of whether they are tourist attractions or not."

