

KUALA LUMPUR (July 4): The River of Life programme, which aims to rehabilitate and beautify the Klang and Gombak rivers, is behind schedule with none of the objectives fully achieved after 13 years and nearly RM4 billion spent.

The RM4.4 billion programme, under the supervision of the Federal Territories Department, has 12 projects still in the pre-implementation stage, the Auditor General's Report on Federal Agencies' Activities 2024 showed. River of Life also has eight projects in implementation, with progress ranging from 21% to 97.3%, it noted.

New contractors have yet to be appointed for two projects following the termination of previous contractors, the report said.

The programme had spent RM3.92 billion out of the allocated RM4.363 billion at the end of 2023.

The report also stated that none of the programme's objectives have been fully achieved, particularly improving river water quality to Class IIB to be suitable for recreational purposes. This shortfall was due to weaknesses in planning, implementation, asset operation, effluent compliance, and care awareness.

River of Life fails to meet objectives after 13 years and nearly RM4 bil spent

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The government's goal to generate up to RM4 billion from land sales to finance the River of Life and avoid using public funds was not met due to lower-than-expected proceeds, the report said.

The incomplete business model left maintenance and activities reliant on government funding, resulting in poorly maintained, idle, damaged, and underutilised assets, the report added.

FT Dept advised to carefully rethink projects in the pipeline

The auditor general advised the Federal Territories Department to assess whether

projects in the pre-implementation stage should continue, taking into account financial allocation for implementation and maintenance as well as their contribution to the River of Life's objectives.

The report also revealed that only 50 out of 296 sewage treatment plants have been rationalised or upgraded. Delays in the readiness of three projects and the termination of one sewage project, meanwhile, resulted in estimated cost increases of up to RM234.72 million.

Additionally, 147 river cleaning assets were found to be non-operational due to damage, demolition, or being unusable. The repair period for damaged assets takes up to four years and three months.

"The construction and repair of two collapsible weir units totalling RM33.37 million did not achieve objectives, as one unit was not operational, while the other failed to be completed," the report read.

The auditor general recommended that the Sewerage Services Department, Kuala Lumpur City Hall, and the Department of Irrigation and Drainage improve project management to ensure compliance with all financial regulations and contract terms and conditions.