

# **Community unites to clear garbage from Ciliwung River**

**A group of more than 60 people, ranging from young children to adults, cruised along the murky and smelly Ciliwung River last weekend to clear it of accumulated garbage.**

**Wearing life vests and helmets, the group, including US Ambassador to Indonesia Robert O. Blake, rowed inflatable boats along the river starting from the Kota Kembang Bridge in Depok, West Java, finishing their two-day “Clean up Ciliwung” activity at the Kampung Melayu Bridge in East Jakarta the following day.**

**“I am happy to be here to raise awareness about the importance of keeping a clean and protected Ciliwung River,” said Blake, who joined the group on the second day to clean the river from a point near Jl. MT Haryono in South Jakarta to the Kampung Melayu Bridge.**

**He said that when he lived in Maryland, in the US, he and his family used to go to a little river near their house and spent two hours picking up all the cans and plastic on the banks of the river. “I am really delighted with the opportunity to do exactly the same thing here in Jakarta along the important river, the Ciliwung River,” Blake said.**

**The event’s organizer, Masyarakat Peduli Air (the Water Community), said in a statement that the solid waste polluting the river could amount to 926 tons, equivalent to 3,704 cubic meters, per day, while liquid waste dumped by industrial companies and houses damaged the river’s ecosystem and reduced the quality of the river’s water.**

**The river’s water has a murky color and emits strong odors at certain points. “Do not forget to give yourselves a good wash. The water is dirty and it can make your skin itchy,” one of the boat guides told the participants, whose clothes got wet from the dirty water.**

**Masyarakat Peduli Air coordinator Ahmad Safrudin said that the river had been heavily polluted by solid and liquid waste for many years. He called on the city administration to clear all the rivers in Jakarta of waste and garbage to help Jakartans get access to clean-water resources.**

**Jakarta sources its tap water from the Jatiluhur Dam in Purwakarta because the water in all 13 rivers flowing through Jakarta is too toxic.**

**“Many industrial companies dump their liquid waste into rivers in an underhand way,” Ahmad said.**

**Many such companies, he said, stored up their liquid waste and when it rained and the river water levels rose, they disposed of their liquid waste into rivers to dilute the waste. It is against the law for businesses to dump toxic waste directly into the river.**

**Ahmad said that besides industrial companies, houses in Jakarta also had a major role in polluting rivers.**

**“The administration should force developers of residential complexes, such as Pantai Indah Kapuk in North Jakarta, to establish waste-management systems,” Ahmad said.**

**Besides adding to the amount of liquid waste, large developers of residential properties in Jakarta also did not help much where solid waste was concerned. Many developers, Ahmad said, only collected garbage at certain places and then dumped it at the Bantar Gebang landfill in Bekasi, West Java.**

**Ahmad said the administration should punish industrial companies and property developers that polluted rivers. “The administration should conduct investigations and arrest one or two violators to deter other perpetrators,” he said, adding that it would be a very effective campaign to conserve clean-water resources.**

**Ahmad expressed concern that to date the administration had not paid much attention to the issue of clean rivers. “For example, we invited Jakarta Governor Joko ‘Jokowi’ Widodo to this event but he did not come himself or even send representatives from his administration,” he said. (ask)**