

Lay off Sipadan

" God gave us such a beautiful gift. Why are we destroying it?"

- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi lashed out at Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman for going ahead with the RM4.5mil clubhouse project at Pulau Sipadan despite his objection.

"I was very angry with Musa. I told him not to build it. I said so many corals are dying and he promised that he would look into the project," said Abdullah, who openly expressed his disappointment and frustration with Musa.

He said the corals would attract tourists and divers from around the world but they would not visit the country if the corals were destroyed.

Abdullah was referring to the construction of a clubhouse, toilets and sewage facilities that started on the island two months ago. It caused serious concern among divers when there was gradual destruction of the coral reefs.

On May 14, a barge from the construction fell onto the seabed and flattened 372.94 sq m of

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coral reef at the island's drop-off point in the north.

Musa ordered construction of the project stopped but later allowed it to continue, provided environment-friendly building materials were used.

Abdullah said he was upset with the general quality of environment in the country, and that Malaysians should learn to appreciate the environment as it was a gift from God.

"God gave us such a beautiful gift. Why are we destroying it?" Abdullah said in his speech when attending the Malaysian Professional Centre annual dinner here last night.

He said more tourists would visit Malaysia if the environment was kept clean.

"Tourists want to enjoy places with beautiful beaches and clean water," Abdullah said.

"But now they are all destroyed. We do not know how to value (the environment).

"Giant leatherback turtles used to lay eggs on the Terengganu shores but now they are not there any more."

He said he was very upset that the majority of the country's rivers were polluted and waterfalls had dried up, such as the ones in Penang.

"Penang used to have a waterfall but now you cannot find it any more. It is a dirty place," he said.

Citing the Gombak-Klang river as another example, Abdullah said Malaysia was fortunate to have a river that ran through the city as it was a beautiful sight.

He said, however, the river was now too polluted. "If you throw a crocodile into the river, the crocodile will die."