

By-laws coming to save precious rainwater

NST - 28/3/2007

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PUTRAJAYA: The government will introduce by-laws requiring certain buildings to be equipped with devices to collect, store and use rainwater.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said such measures had to be taken in anticipation of future water shortages.

"We have to ensure that this is enforced through the by-laws," he said after chairing the Third National Water Resources Council meeting here yesterday.

Also present were his deputy, Datuk Seri Najib Razak, and Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid.

"First, we have to identify what category of buildings must install rainwater harvesting equipment like gutters," Abdullah said.

"Obviously, we need a large area to harvest rainwater. The roofs must be big enough to collect an adequate amount of water. Smaller houses, low-cost units and flats will not be required to adopt this system."

Bungalows, schools, building complexes, factories and manufacturing plants may have to install such equipment.

Abdullah said the Housing and Local Government Ministry had been asked to formulate the by-laws.

"The draft will be tabled at the Cabinet Committee for Housing and Local Government, chaired by the deputy prime minister."

Instead of using treated water for non-essential purposes, Abdullah said, consumers could resort to using rainwater.

"It is a sheer waste for treated



A model of a house using the rainwater utilisation system which allows rainwater to be collected and used for washing and cleaning.

water to be used to wash cars or water plants when it should be for bathing, for instance. When we use treated water for such chores, our water bills will increase and we are the ones who will lose out."

Abdullah said saving treated water was part of the government's energy efficiency programme.

"(Collecting rainwater) should be practised by the people," he

said. "There is a need to instil awareness among them. The efficient use of treated water will help lower their water bills."

The prime minister also said immediate measures must be taken to stop river pollution.

"Many rivers are highly polluted and there are also 'dead' rivers where the water can no longer be used or treated. River pollution should be avoided at all cost."

He said the problem was worse in urban areas, industrial sites and densely populated residential areas where the indiscriminate dumping of rubbish, toxic materials and other pollutants into rivers was still taking place. Abdullah said tackling the problem required a combination of enforcement and preventive measures.

"We must prevent all toxic materials and pollutants from going into the rivers. If this can be done all over the country, pollution can be minimised and the cost of treating such rivers will be reduced."

Abdullah said all menteri besar and chief ministers had been ordered to look into the condition of the country's rivers.

"They have been instructed to adopt this save-the-rivers project. They should ensure that any activity that pollutes rivers is stopped."

He stressed that both short- and long-term measures were needed to prevent further pollution.

"One of the short-term efforts is having laws that forbid the dumping of pollutants into rivers or drains. This must be done immediately.

"To rehabilitate rivers, we need a lot of money and long-term planning."

The council also decided to study underground water resources in the country.

"We have to identify these underground resources," Abdullah said. "We want detailed information so that we know exactly what to expect and what to do."

He said plans to map such resources had been drawn up in the past but never carried out.

A study of the management of integrated river basins was also approved.