

Protect our water resources, says PM

NST- 8/4/2007.

■ By Ahmad Fairuz Othman

news@nst.com.my

LANGKAWI: The Water Festival 2007 was launched by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin last night in a ceremony steeped in tradition.

The launch of the event was witnessed by about 10,000 people at the Dataran Lang in Kuah.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the National Water Festival Month could increase awareness on the importance of water in the country's economic, tourism and food sectors.

"This festival emphasises the importance of water as a resource, and as a gift from Allah."

He said water had endless benefits, from providing food to running hydroelectric power plants. Lakes and rivers were also an attractive tourism product.

He said the government regarded water as a valuable commodity which needed to be conserved.

"It is an important agenda for all state governments to monitor water catchment areas, especially rivers and lakes," he said in his speech.

Various activities have been lined up for the festival, one of the official events under the Visit Malaysia Year 2007 calendar, including water games and a sand-sculpting competition.

Earlier, Tuanku Mizan arrived



Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin pouring water into a bamboo trough to launch the Water Festival 2007 in Langkawi last night. Looking on are (from left) Sultan of Kedah, Abdullah, Tengku Adnan and Mahdzir.

at Dataran Lang on a royal float called *Bahtera Merong Mahawangsa*.

The launch began with Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor presenting the king a ladle fashioned from palm fronds.

Tuanku Mizan scooped water

from a *tempayan* (earth vase) and poured it into a bamboo trough which drained into a man-made lake near the main stage.

This was followed by the release of 50 doves which signified the country's 50 years of independence.

Also present were Raja Per-

maisuri Agong Tuanku Nur Zahirah, Sultan of Kedah Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, Sultanah of Kedah Sultanah Haminah Hamidun and Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid.

The month-long festival will end in Pantai Puteri, Malacca, on May 6.