

PM: Protect water sources

Onus on state govts to ensure they are not polluted

LANGKAWI: All state governments have been directed to preserve water catchments and protect water sources against pollution.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the onus was on the state governments to take care of water sources.

"Rivers, lakes and all water sources must be kept clean," he said at the launching of the National Water Festival 2007 at Dataran Lang here last night.

He said it was the Government's policy to protect the environment and water resources for the future generation.

He also said water festivals could be a tourist draw.

Abdullah also called on the Kedah Government to protect and preserve the beautiful beaches and sea of Langkawi.

"If the seawater is kept clean, Langkawi will continue to attract thousands of visitors," he said.

During the opening ceremony, Dataran Lang took on a fairyland atmosphere as a royal barge named after the legendary Merong Mahawangsa made its maiden journey to the main stage.

On board were the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan

Zainal Abidin, the Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Nur Zahirah, Kedah Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'Adzam Shah, Sultanah Haminah Hamidon and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Accompanying them were Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid.

A total of 100 army personnel clad in black Baju Melayu pulled the 150m-long barge from the Dataran Lang arch to the royal stage located about 200m away.

Governors and vice-governors from the Thai provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, Satun, Pattani and Songkhla were among the 40,000 people who came for the grand ceremony.

Tuanku Mizan launched the festival by pouring water from a *gayung upih* (traditional water container) into a bamboo trough.

The water flowed down to a mini lake, activating a fountain.

A pretty maiden released 500 birds as the water fountain lit up with a firework display in the background. Adnan said the festival attracted a large number of tourists as more than 20,000 tourism packages were sold.



Maiden voyage: The royal barge ferrying the King and Queen, Abdullah, the Sultan and Sultanah of Kedah, Mahdzir and his wife Datin Seri Noraini Abdullah and other royalty during the opening ceremony of the National Water Festival at Dataran Lang yesterday.

"This national festival is held nationwide for a month," he said, adding that the closing ceremony would be held at Pantai Puteri in Malacca on May 6.

He said water festivals would also be held in Danga Bay, Johor,

on April 21, Regatta Lepa in Semporna, Sabah, from April 20 to April 22, and Perlis on April 28.

Adnan also said Malaysia would be aggressively promoted as an international destination for water sports events.

Earlier at a sand sculpting demonstration in Pantai Cenang here, Adnan helped professional sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik from India in his sand sculpture depicting Mother Earth and the Petronas Twin Towers.