

Looking at options to treat waste

N87-7/3/2007



WAN HAMIDI HAMID

Reporting from
TOKYO

THE government is in the process of making a strategic decision to solve the country's mounting rubbish woes by finding the right, proven and affordable technology.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said that although the government was comfortable with the current sanitary landfill system, it would continue to look at other viable options.

"We're aware that solid waste management is getting more important. We're giving it more focused attention," he told Malaysian and Japanese guests at a luncheon on business opportunities in Malaysia here yesterday.

Najib, who chairs the Cabinet Committee on Solid Waste Management, said the government was serious in its efforts to resolve the solid waste issue.

According to a Universiti Putra Malaysia study last year, Malaysia's major cities produce an average of 1.5 million tonnes of solid waste annually.

The study claimed that Malaysia's environmental problems associated with solid waste were caused mainly by improper disposal.

Najib, who is on an official visit to Japan, later visited the Chuo incineration plant to study its hygienic methods of

waste treatment.

Located about 15km from the heart of Tokyo, the incineration plant, which cost Japanese taxpayers about RM900 million when it was built six years ago, is one of many throughout the capital city.

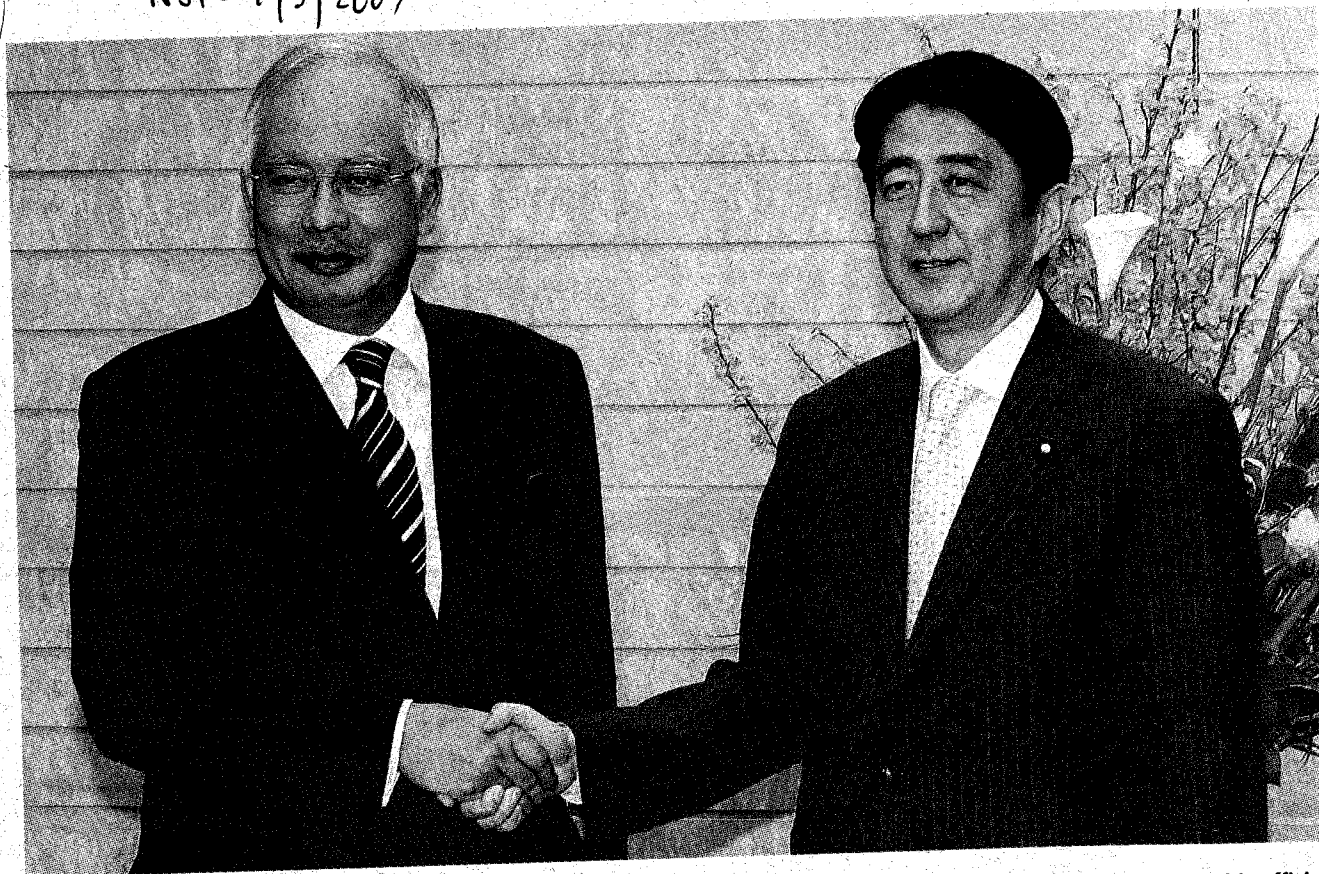
During a briefing for Najib and his delegation, including Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, plant officials explained that besides disposing waste without damaging the environment, the incinerator also generated heat energy and electricity for 35,000 homes in the area.

Some of the recycled waste is turned into pavement bricks, floor tiles and wallpaper.

A plant official said that when the Japanese government faced opposition from local residents and environmentalists during the 1980s, it took every effort to eliminate toxic dioxin emissions from waste incinerators.

Without implying any commitment, Najib said that based on the Kyoto Protocol's aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, investment in reducing pollution could gain revenue for the country.

During his earlier dialogue with the Japanese business



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak making a courtesy call on Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (right) at his official residence in Tokyo yesterday. — AP picture

community, the deputy prime minister also said that while Malaysia was focused on high technology, the government gave equal attention to agriculture and agro-based industries.

He said the government was willing to consider any proposal pertaining to agro-based industries, including fisheries and aquaculture.

On ICT, Najib admitted that

Internet broadband penetration in Malaysia was still low and the government was looking into wireless technology, offering Japanese companies partnerships with local counterparts.

"We will ensure regulation or deregulation (of ICT) is based on the world-standard best practices," he added.

On concerns about the safety and security of the Straits of

Malacca, Najib said co-ordinated patrols and eye-in-the-sky surveillance had managed to reduce piracy to almost zero.

"Even Lloyd's of London (the British insurers) have delisted the Straits of Malacca as a war zone," he said.

Later in the evening, Najib met Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his defence counterpart Fumio Kyuma.

Najib also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Kaneka Corporation and Malaysia Biotechnology Corporation to develop and produce biopolymers using Malaysian palm oil as feedstock.

The renewable and sustainable biopolymers can be used as plastic and packaging, and some are biodegradable.