

Rivers are not dumps

PM: No houses, factories to be built near river banks

KUALA LUMPUR: Rivers belong to everyone and no one must be allowed to pollute or treat them as a dumping ground, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister said all authorities must ensure that no houses were built close to riverbanks and all existing factories there must be relocated.

"If we allow factories or houses to be built on riverbanks, the rivers will become dumping grounds," he said after launching the Federation of Malay Economic Bodies at the Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday.

He was asked about the outcome of his earlier visit to the Department of Environment (DOE) in Putrajaya.

Abdullah said a more comprehensive approach was needed to tackle environmental pollution in the country, particularly those affecting the rivers.

He said he was very concerned about the various environmental problems affecting the country lately, most of which were caused by human error and greed.

"Our rivers and seas are polluted. Illegal dumping of all kinds of waste is on the increase. Our hills are damaged

and our embankments are crumbling," he said.

"All these problems must be contained. Efforts must be intensified to create greater public awareness on the need to protect and preserve the environment," he added.

All environment-related laws and regulations must be implemented fully and monitored all the time, he added.

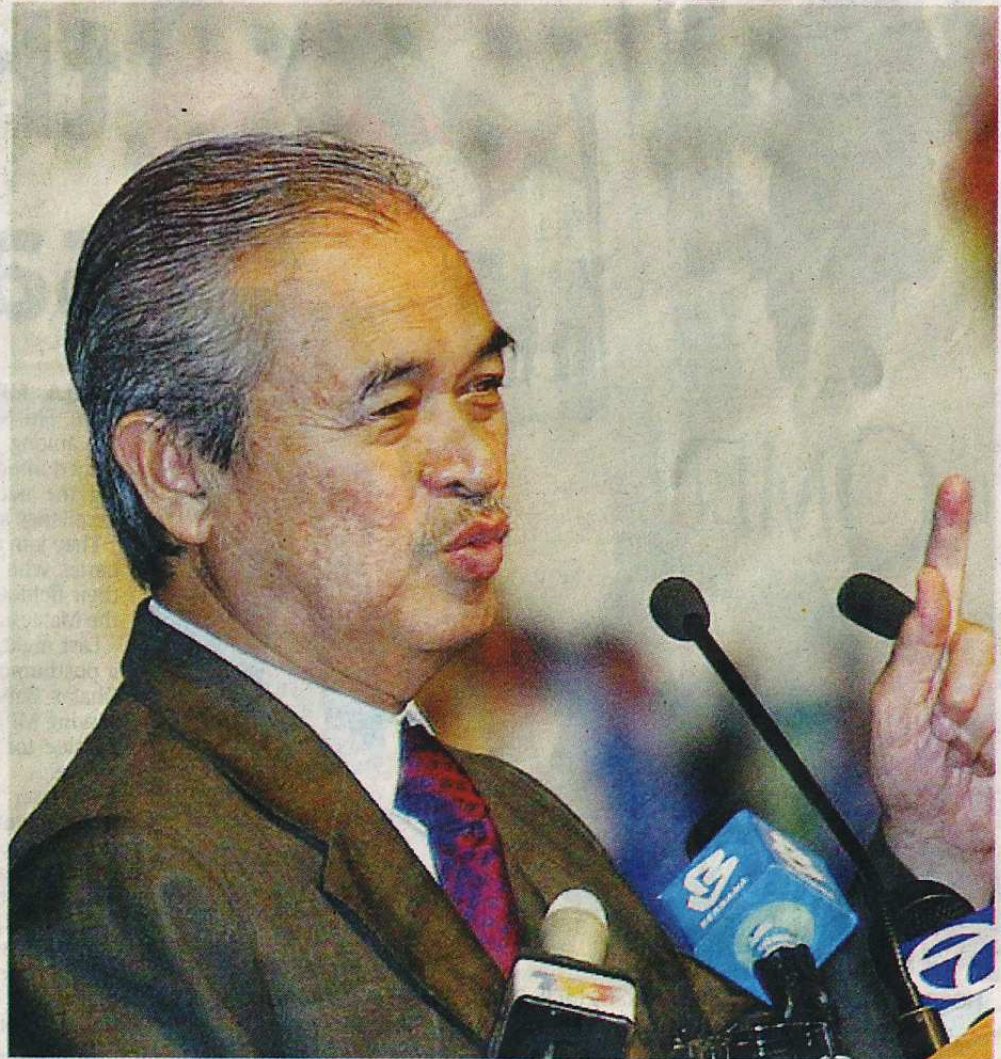
Abdullah said he had made several recommendations to the DOE on improving the implementation of environment-related laws and strengthening the Environmental Quality Act 1974 currently under review.

They, he said, included making sure that developers did not get away with not conducting the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) simply by breaking their projects into smaller parcels.

Under the law, only projects of 50ha or more are required to have an EIA.

Abdullah said he also reminded the DOE that it was a central agency and should always be alert and quick in its actions, including the approval or rejection of EIAs.

The DOE, he added, was supposed to be a facilitator and not frustrate the private sector.



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