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Urgent need to recycle, says PM

PUTRAJAYA: The people are not doing enough to nurture and protect the environment and this has saddened Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians continued to produce large amounts of waste – 25,600 tonnes – daily.

With waste production projected to grow by 3.6% each year, he said landfills would be at full capacity by 2020.



PM's bouquet: Nor Mohamed Yakcop presenting the Hibiscus Challenge Trophy to Petronas Oil Business' vice-president Datuk Anuar Ahmad at the presentation in Putrajaya last night.

Abdullah recalled that four years ago at the National Recycling Day, he spoke about the idea of “first-class infrastructure, third-class mentality”, and how this was illustrated in the way Malaysians treated the environment.

“Sadly, there has not been enough movement on that since then,” he said, adding that with the large amount of waste being generated, there was an even more urgent need to promote recycling.

“But even in this regard, we are still falling short. Today, our recycling rate is at 5%. This is an improvement over the 3% in 2003, but still far below the recycling rate of 30% to 47% that is registered in developed countries.” he said in his speech read out by Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop at the Prime Minister's Hibiscus Awards at a hotel here last night.

Abdullah reminded companies that their corporate social responsibility should not be limited to donating money or material gifts to charities, schools and orphanages.

“You must also take responsibility for the impact of your business activities on the environment,” he said, adding that rivers were being threatened daily by pollution.

He said as at 2006, 146 river basins in the country were classified as “polluted”, while another 59 were classified as “slightly polluted.” “While I continue to be saddened by the state of our rivers, I believe that we can turn this situation around,” he said.

On a brighter note, Abdullah said he was glad that the Hibiscus Awards, a premier private sector environmental award for businesses and industries, had played a role in promoting good environmental practices.