

Most rivers clean until they reach urban areas

BAGAN SERAI: Most rivers in the country are clean – until they meander through urban areas, said Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) director-general Datuk Keizrul Abdullah.

“When rivers are polluted, a lot of money is needed to treat the water,” he said.

On the presence of squatters along river reserves, which often obstruct de-silting and river widening works, Keizrul said the department was working closely with the local authorities to relocate them.

The squatter problem would not exist if employers provided housing for their foreign workers, he told reporters at the opening of a seminar on water resources and environment themed, *Application of Nuclear and Related Technologies*, at a resort here yesterday.

Keizrul said his department, unlike the land office, was not vested with legal power to act against such trespassers.

The two-day seminar, opened by Perak Health, Environment and Innovation committee chairman Datuk Tan Chin Meng, was jointly organised by the DID and the Malaysian Institute for Nuclear Technology (Mint).

On the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP),



SWITCHING TO NATURE: Keizrul (left) telling Tan and Mint deputy director-general Datuk Dr Nahrul Khair Alang Md Rashid how rainwater can be collected for domestic use at a seminar exhibition booth yesterday.

Keizrul said the Government had allocated RM510mil for cleaning, preserving and beautifying rivers.

A river in each state would be selected for the beautification programme, he said, adding that Sungai Kinta, near Ipoh, had been chosen for this purpose in Perak.

Regarding the RM4bil allocated for flood mitigation under the 9MP, Keizrul said this was not enough as the DID needed at least RM19bil for the project nationwide.

Nevertheless, he said, the RM4bil would be used evenly among the states.

Responding to a question, he said ponds would be constructed at flood-prone locations to absorb excess rainwater in these areas.

“We are now identifying suitable sites to build such ponds,” he said.

Meanwhile, Tan, who opened the seminar on behalf of Menteri Besar Mohd Tajol Rosli Ghazali, said that any research and development (R&D) efforts undertaken jointly by the DID and Mint should not be confined to water and environment management.

The R&D efforts should be extended to the agriculture, industrial and civil engineering sectors as well, he added.