

Watch over 40 more dumpsites

KUALA LUMPUR: Forty more open dumpsites have been found near water intake points and they could be closed down.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid said the authorities were monitoring the dumpsites and would order their closure if there was the slightest indication of pollution.

"We will not hesitate to shut them down, just like the 16 open dumpsites which were closed last month," he said after opening a seminar on environment and biodiversity here yesterday.

The two-day seminar was jointly organised by the min-

istry and the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding.

The 16 open dumpsites located in Johor, Kedah, Selangor, Pahang, Malacca, Negri Sembilan and Perak, were closed down to prevent water contamination.

Azmi said there were 155 open dumpsites in the country and the authorities were checking those located near water intake points.

On another matter, Azmi said contractors involved in disposing of toxic wastes in unauthorised areas would be slapped with the mandatory jail sentence if the ministry's proposed

amendment to the Environment Quality Act was passed in Parliament.

"We are proposing that those who dispose of toxic wastes illegally – whether they are factory owners, lorry owners or estate owners who allow their land to be used for burying toxic waste – be slapped with mandatory imprisonment," he said.

"There will be no sympathy, and anyone caught disposing of the waste illegally will go straight to jail."

He added that the present penalty, which included a maximum fine of RM500,000, was found to be ineffective in deterring such activity.