

MAHATHIR - TIMBER  
BM

KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 11 (BERNAMA) -- THE PRIME MINISTER TODAY URGED INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES TO IMPORT PROCESSED WOOD FROM MALAYSIA TO HELP IT REDUCE 178 RATE OF LOGGING.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID MANY COUNTRIES HAD URGED TIMBER PRODUCERS INCLUDING MALAYSIA TO CUT DOWN ON THEIR LOGGING OF FORESTS BUT HAD NOT FOLLOWED UP THE CALL WITH OFFERS OF AID FOR THE PURPOSE.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER VISITING THE FORESTRY RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT KEPONG NEAR HERE, HE SAID IT WAS EASY FOR THEM TO TALK ABOUT CUTTING DOWN ON LOGGING BUT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES LIKE MALAYSIA NEEDED THE REVENUE FROM TIMBER EXPORTS TO FINANCE THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

HE SUGGESTED THAT THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES SET UP WOOD PROCESSING FACTORIES IN MALAYSIA SO THAT THE COUNTRY COULD BENEFIT FULLY FROM THE DOWNSTREAM ACTIVITIES.

THE MOVE WOULD ENABLE MALAYSIA TO MAXIMIZE UTILIZATION OF ITS FORESTRY RESOURCES AND EXPORT ONLY FINISHED PRODUCTS. --- MORE  
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IT WOULD ALSO HELP THIS COUNTRY UPGRADE EFFICIENCY OF TIMBER UTILIZATION AND REDUCE LOGGING OF FOREST AREAS, HE ADDED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT REAFFORESTATION PROGRAMMES WERE EXPENSIVE UNDERTAKINGS.

ON THE GOVERNMENT BAN ON LOG EXPORTS FROM PENINSULAR MALAYSIA FROM NEXT YEAR, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE BAN WOULD NOT AFFECT EARNINGS OF LOGGERS IN THE PENINSULA AS THEIR PRODUCTION ACCOUNTED FOR ONLY 41,000 CUBIC METRES OR 0.9 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S TOTAL LOG PRODUCTION.

IT HAS ONLY RIGHT THAT MORE TIMBER FROM MALAYSIA BE EXPORTED IN A PROCESSED FORM, HE SAID.

ONLY SABAH AND SARAWAK WOULD BE ALLOWED TO EXPORT UNPROCESSED LOGS, HE ADDED.

MEANWHILE, PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTER DATUK PAUL LEONG, WHO ACCOMPANIED THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE VISIT TO THE INSTITUTE, SAID MALAYSIA HAD NOT YET SIGNED THE INTERNATIONAL TIMBER AGREEMENT SPONSORED BY THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD). -- MORE 1653/MB

ZCZC N056 (F/S)

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"WE ARE STILL STUDYING THE AGREEMENT, PARTICULARLY THE PROVISION ON TROPICAL HARDWOOD," HE SAID.

HOWEVER, HE DECLINED TO ELABORATE. -- BERNAMA 1700/WS