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KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 8 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD WANTS ETHNO-BOTANICAL GARDENS REFLECTIVE OF THE WAY OF LIFE OF MALAYSIANS TO BE SET UP IN ALL TOWNS IN THE COUNTRY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID SUCH GARDENS SHOULD BE PLANTED WITH FLORA COMMONLY USED BY MALAYSIANS FOR FOOD, FLAVOURING, DYES, MEDICINE AS WELL AS FOR CEREMONIAL PURPOSES AND DECORATION.

OPENING THE INTERNATIONAL CRAFTS MUSEUM AND TAMAN KARYANEKA HERE TODAY, HE SAID THE GARDENS WOULD ALSO SERVE TO BEAUTIFY THE LANDSCAPE AND PROVIDE A RETREAT FOR THOSE CAUGHT UP WITH THE HECTIC PRESSURES OF CITY LIFE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE INTENSE URBANISATION PROCESS, TAKING PLACE IN THE COUNTRY HAD CREATED +CONCRETE JUNGLES+ AND ADDED: +SURELY NONE OF US WANT TO SEE THIS BECOMING A PERMANENT FEATURE.+

HE SAID MANY TYPES OF PLANTS THAT WERE ONCE FOUND IN ABUNDANCE AND USEFUL TO THE PEOPLE WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY RARE. -- MORE  
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AS SUCH, THERE WAS A GREAT NEED FOR ETHNO-BOTANICAL GARDENS WHERE THESE PLANTS COULD BE GROWN FOR THE BENEFIT OF FUTURE GENERATIONS, HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT EVEN THOUGH THE USE OF LAND FOR SUCH A PURPOSE WOULD NOT PROVE ECONOMIC, THE GOVERNMENT NEVERTHELESS WANTED SUCH GARDENS TO BE CREATED SO THAT +WE WILL NOT LOSE OUR IDENTITY.+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE TAMAN KARYANEKA WOULD BE AN ADDED ATTRACTION FOR TOURISTS HUNTING FOR SOUVENIRS AT THE KARYANEKA CENTRE.

THE GARDENS WOULD PROVIDE A WELCOME CHANGE OF SCENERY AMIDST THE LOOKING SKYSCAPERS OF THE CITY.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID MALAYSIANS WERE GIFTED IN THE FINE ART OF HANDICRAFT-MAKING AND AS HANDICRAFT HAD BECOME AN INDUSTRY IN ITS OWN RIGHT, PRODUCTION HAD TO BE PROPERLY PLANNED. -- MORE  
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HE ALSO SAID MALAYSIAN HANDICRAFT MUST BE OF HIGH QUALITY AND MADE TO EXACTING STANDARDS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO VISITED THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES RECENTLY, SAID SCANDINAVIAN HANDICRAFT HAD SECURED A NICHE IN THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH THEIR DESIGN WAS CONTEMPORARY THEY HAD NOT SACRIFICED THEIR IDENTITY.

HE SAID A FINNISH ORGANISATION WITH INTERESTS IN HANDICRAFT MANUFACTURING HAD AGREED TO LOAN ITS EXPERTS TO HELP MALAYSIA UPGRADE ITS HANDICRAFT DESIGNING.

ALSO PRESENT WERE DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH, WHO IS THE KARYANEKA ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, AND NATIONAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER DATUK SERI SANUSI JUNID.

THE TAMAN KARYANEKA, LOCATED ON A 0.2 HECTARE SITE IN THE GROUNDS OF THE MUSEUM, HAS 400 TYPES OF PLANTS, INCLUDING +KUNYIT+ (TURMERIC), +CENGKIH+ (CLOVE-SPICE) AND +PANDAN+ (FRAGRANT SCREW-PINE) AND PLANTS WITH MEDICINAL VALUE.

THE MUSEUM ITSELF HAS ON DISPLAY 50 TYPES OF HANDICRAFT FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING 10 FROM THE SERI PERDANA COLLECTION DONATED BY DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR. --- BERNAMA  
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