

D949

U E169 AAE
MAHATHIR-UUM
BM

JITRA, NOV 24 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY SAID HE WAS DISTURBED BY THE EXCESSIVE NUMBER OF TREES FELLED AT UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA (UUM) CAMPUS SITE IN SINTOK.

HE SAID THIS SHOWED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S DIRECTIVE TO RETAIN THE TREES WAS +NOT CHANNELLED DOWN.+

THE FELLING OF TREES FOR THE BUILDING OF THE CAMPUS, SITUATED ABOUT 60 KM FROM ALOR SETAR, HAD MADE THE AREA DEVOID OF TREES.

THE CAMPUS COULD BE BUILT WITHOUT SUCH EXCESSIVE FELLING OF TREES, HE TOLD REPORTERS WHEN TOURING THE UNIVERSITY'S CAMPUS SITE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, HOWEVER, DID NOT BLAME ANYONE OVER THE MATTER. -- MORE

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+WE CANNOT BLAME THE CONTRACTOR, AS I UNDERSTAND, THE CONTRACTOR WAS ORDERED TO CLEAR THE LAND,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY KEDAH MENTERI BESAR DATUK SERI HAJI OSMAN AROFF, ATTENDED A BRIEFING BY UUM'S DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (STUDENT AFFAIRS) DR UZAIR ABDUL MALIK.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID GENERALLY HE WAS SATISFIED WITH THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE BUILDING OF THE CAMPUS.

ON UUM'S ALLEGATIONS THAT 400 TEAK TREES, VALUED AT \$6 MILLION, WERE STOLEN FROM THE CAMPUS SITE, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IT WAS UNTRUE BECAUSE TEAK WAS NOT NATIVE TO THE COUNTRY, UNLESS CULTIVATED.

HE, HOWEVER, DID NOT DENY THE THEFT OF OTHER VARIETIES OF TREES THAT WERE NOT AS VALUABLE AS TEAK. -- MORE

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HE SAID THE CULPRITS HAD BEEN FINED AND HE HAD DIRECTED THE UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE THAT THE MATTER DID NOT RECUR.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR AND HIS WIFE, DATUK SERI DATIN PADUKA DR SITI HASMAH, ARRIVED YESTERDAY FOR A TWO-DAY VISIT TO THE STATE.

THEY FLEW TO LANGKAWI THIS AFTERNOON FROM ALOR SETAR. -- BERNAMA
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