

Dr M unhappy directive on trees not heeded

**By Syed Abu Bakar
and Rizaudin Wahab**

JJTRA, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed regret that indiscriminate felling of trees at the Universiti Utara Malaysia permanent campus at Sintok was carried out despite his directive that the trees should be preserved.

He said that although he was not blaming anybody, it nevertheless showed that his directive had not reached the bottom level.

He said he had been informed that the contractors had merely been told to clear the land for construction and this was what the contractors did.

"One cannot blame the contractors but I am dissatisfied that my directive not to fell the trees indiscriminately had not reached the bottom level."

He said he would take steps to ensure that such a thing would not happen again.

The Prime Minister said the felling of the trees had caused the land to be over-heated and it

would take many years for trees to grow again.

He, however, said he was satisfied with the progress of the construction of the campus.

He was speaking to reporters after lunch at the residence of Kubang Pasu district officer Datuk Haji Ismail Haji Shafie.

The Prime Minister had earlier visited the site of the campus and was briefed on its construction.

According to UUM Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Uzir Abdul Malek, who briefed the Prime Minister, the project

was 16.5 per cent completed but nine per cent behind schedule due to rain.

About 10,000 students would be accommodated at the university when it is completed.

On allegations that \$6 million worth of teak trees in the campus grounds had been stolen, Dr Mahathir said he was surprised as he knew that no teak trees grew in Malaysia on their own.

He also said the trees could not have been on the Thai side of the border as claimed by some people.