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SPEED UP ENVIRONMENT IMPACT REPORTS, SAYS MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 3rd (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for the speeding up of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) reports for smooth implementation of development projects for the people's benefit.

Many projects had been delayed because there were no set standards in preparing the EIA reports and the high requirements contained in some of the reports, he said.

+The Government is giving priority to environment... we are very conscious and responsible in matters concerning the environment but at times we find there are no set standards in arriving at such reports and the requirements are higher than even in developed countries,+ he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after chairing a meeting of the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council at Umno headquarters at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

+We should realise that national economic growth is very important for the people and we cannot allow any delay in this matter,+ Dr Mahathir who is BN Chairman said. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the decision to approve the EIA reports was based on the assessment of one person or several persons and this caused it to be not uniform.

As such there was a need for a single format which ensured uniformity in approving the EIA reports, he said.

A newspaper report today quoted the Minister of Science, Technology and Environment Law Hieng Ding as saying that at present there were no set standards and different consultants would come up with their own version of EIA reports.

They tend to do their own thinking, he had said.

Replying to questions, Dr Mahathir said state governments should abide by the standards made by the Federal Government on EIA reports.

Even though land matters were under the jurisdiction of the states, the Federal Government could nevertheless act if the project polluted the environment, the Prime Minister said.

+For instance if the state government has a factory which pollutes the air... even though it was on state land, we (Federal Government) can still take action,+ he said. -- Bernama