

# Dr M: We do more

NST 11 SEP 1993

By Farush Khan and Rosli Zakaria

**B**  
KUALA TERENGGANU, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the West should not practise double standard in the preservation of nature and the environment.

He said the West was only interested in asking others to do it the way they wanted but did not practise what they preached, adding that in terms of forest and environment preservation, Malaysia was doing more than them.

"We preserve our forest and trees but they (the West) uproot them," he told reporters at the end of his two-hour visit to Pulau Redang, about 45 nautical miles from here today to see the development on the island.

He was asked to comment on reports that the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature Malaysia round sedimentation from the Redang Island Resort Sdn Bhd (RIR) development activities on the island was killing the corals and mangroves.

Dr Mahathir said the project could go on, saying that if the WWF wanted it to be called off, it should provide sources of income to the islanders.

"In my opinion, it is better for the fishermen to be resettled to make way for the (tourism) project. We can develop a water village like the one in Brunei. We can rent the place and get some income," he said.

The WWF, he said, only knew how to tell others to do as they wished but did not offer any money.

On the preservation of trees, he said Malaysia was more concerned about it and had been practising it more than the West, adding that this could be seen from the size of green areas preserved in Malaysia.

Fifty-six per cent of Malaysia is still covered with forest. This does not include the additional 14 per cent of trees in plantations.

"This means we have only worked on 30 per cent of our land but in their (Western) countries, they have cleared all," he said.

The Prime Minister said while Malaysia was determined to preserve the forest, it could not neglect the interest of the people who would also need to earn a living.

"How can we preserve

trees to the extent that the people cannot find food?" he said.

He regretted that the West had not fulfilled its pledge made at the Unicef meeting in Rio recently to raise funds for environment preservation work in developing countries.

"They do not want us to cut trees because they want to market their wood," he said.

The Prime Minister pointed out that being rich, the West should help countries like Malaysia.

"Their per capita income is US\$30,000 (RM76,200) a year while ours is only US\$3,000. Why can't they give some money to us?" he said.

On criticism by Indonesia against the United States for not selling it arms because of "human rights reasons", Dr Mahathir said human rights should not be linked with other issues, saying that this could be interpreted as arm-twisting.

He said if Malaysia had wanted, it could also have boycotted US products because the US did not give land to the Red Indians.

"The Red Indians owned vast tracts of land in the US but they are now living on reserve land under very deplorable conditions. So, they (US) should take care of the Red Indians first. No need to control us. We know how to manage ourselves," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who flew to Pulau Redang in a helicopter, was earlier briefed on the development by the Berjaya Group executive director Datuk Wan Adli Wan Ibrahim. Also present were Deputy Minister of Primary Industries Tengku Mahmud Mansor, Berjaya Group chief executive officer Tan Sri Vincent Tan and Redang Island Resort executive chairman Datuk Annuar Embong. RIR is a member of the Berjaya Group.

The first phase of the RM350 million project involves the construction of 25 units of four-room chalets, 152-room hotel, a nine-hole golf course, a club house and staff quarters. It is expected to be ready in March or April next year. Adli said another nine holes of the golf course would be developed next year.

The second phase will involve the development of a 300-room hotel costing about RM80 million. The third phase will see the con-

struction of between 200 and 300 bungalows at a cost of RM60 million.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said that the 250 families living at Kuala Redang would be resettled in Ulu Redang once the low-cost houses there were ready in about six months.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir, who had stayed the night at Tasik Kenyir, said he was satisfied with the steps taken by the Terengganu State Government to develop it into a prime tourist attraction.

He was pleased the construction of the chalets did not damage the forest and its surroundings because the buildings were in between the trees.

However, he said the development efforts including

the construction of hotels should be stepped up.

"As for the submerged trees in the lake, efforts are being made to clear them but there are many more in the lake. The tree stumps that are just below the water surface are a danger to boats," he said.

Speaking to reporters after addressing a gathering of Umno members and community leaders at the Menteri Besar's residence here, Dr Mahathir also said that the State Government had agreed to sell the land at a minimal price, at least for the moment.

"The land is for tourism projects only. That is why it is cheap at the moment. But as the tourism industry of the lake progresses, I believe the State Government would charge the market

for Nature

price," he added.

Dr Mahathir was in Tasik Kenyir yesterday to have a closer look at the development in the largest man-made lake in the country.

In May 1991, the State Government came under fire from the Federal Government for the slow development of Tasik Kenyir, with many projects running behind schedule.

Since then, the State Government had spent RM6.5 million to build 48 chalets at Pulau Poh, near Sungai Gawi. The facilities were opened to the public early this year.

On State-owned Kolej Agama Sultan Zainal Abidin (Kusza) in Gong Badak seeking university status, Dr Mahathir said the Government was willing to consider the State Govern-

ment's request.

"In Kusza, the students were taught in English and Arabic. But in our education system, we emphasised on the national language as the medium.

"If Kusza wishes to enter our education system, the medium must be in accordance with the law. But if we do that, several courses in the college must be dropped.

"We have to make a study to find out if this is good or bad," he added.

On the report that Umno Semporna division chief Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai had submitted a memorandum to him, Dr Mahathir said: "I have not received it yet. If I have, I will look at it."

Yesterday, Sakaran said 19 Umno divisions in Sabah

had expressed their unhappiness with Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghafar Baba, who is also Umno Sabah's liaison chief.

Sakaran said the divisions had conveyed this to party president, Dr Mahathir, in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister.

On the statement by Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat that the State Government was prepared to face the Federal Government in court on the Kelantan South Development Authority (Kesedar) land title issue, Dr Mahathir said:

"If we find that their actions were not according to law, then we have to bring them to court. We'll let the court decide."