

# A SMALL PRICE FOR PROSPERITY

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**KUCHING:** Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday launched Sarawak's RM15-billion Bakun Dam hydroelectric project which he said would bring prosperity to the state and its people.

The Prime Minister acknowledged that a small price had to be paid and the project might result in the loss of trees, some animals and the displacement of the local residents.

"It is a waste not to use the gifts of nature," he stressed.

"We have a lot of natural resources and we should utilise them wisely."

In this context, he hit out at foreigners for instigating local people to oppose the development of hydroelectric projects in the country.

Dr Mahathir said it was hypocritical for them to tell Malaysians not to fell trees when they destroyed their own forests and enjoyed cheap electricity generated from hydroelectric projects.

If these foreigners were sincere about the environment, they should demolish their hydroelectric dams and replace them with trees, he said.

"Malaysia will be willing to share with them its tree planting technology," he said.

Dr Mahathir said foreigners did not want Malay-

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## PM: Time ripe for Bakun project

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sians to be as civilised and progressive as them.

With the eventual implementation of the Bakun Dam, he hoped Sarawak would not only prove it was capable of implementing a complex project but that it could also keep pace with other states in economic development.

He said although the

Bakun project was initiated 14 years ago, it was not viable to implement it then because of the lack of demand for electricity and the Government could not afford the huge investment in the project.

The Prime Minister said the time was now ripe to implement the Bakun project because the peninsula faced a power shortage and the country

had to double its electricity output.

Dr Mahathir said although the capital outlay was huge, the project was one of the cheapest means of producing electricity.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud described the Government's approval for the privatisation of the Bakun project to a Sarawak company as the single biggest

contribution to the state since it joined the federation in 1963.

He said the Bakun project would create multiple spin-offs that would stimulate the state's economic growth, be it in the manufacturing and tourism sectors.

Dr Mahathir later unveiled a plaque and a model of the Bakun project to mark the launch.