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Mahathir-trees

MAHATHIR SLAMS INDISCRIMINATE TREE FELLING, HILL-CUTTING

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Tanah Rata (Cameron Highland), Aug. 11 (Bernama) <sup>194</sup> <sup>(P)</sup> -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today some state governments and departments still ignored a directive to cease indiscriminate felling of trees and hill clearing for development projects.

Without naming the state governments or departments involved, the Prime Minister said he issued the directive a long time ago and he had often repeated it.

"I also learned that there are state governments that issue logging licences for hilltop areas resulting in too many trees being felled and causing pollution," he told reporters at the end of a visit to the Cameron Highlands here.

He said state governments were keen to develop highland areas to attract tourists but their efforts would be in vain if the areas were denuded.

The federal government did not prohibit building on hillslopes but the development must adopt methods that did not destroy the natural environment, he added. -- more

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Mahathir-trees 2 Tanah Rata

For example, he said, hotels and chalets could be built on hillslopes without the need to cut the hill side.

Only those areas that were necessary should be cut instead of levelling the whole hill, he added.

Dr Mahathir commended the concept used in the construction of a hotel in Pulau Langkawi, and another in Pulau Pangkor.

On the construction of a highway linking Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill and Genting Highlands, he said the project, estimated to cost RM1,000 million, would begin as soon as an offer was received from the private sector.

The project was costly because the government wanted to ensure that there was minimal tree-felling and slope-cutting during the construction, he added.

"If we want to protect the environmental beauty, we must spend a little more," he said.

He said the project would not be a highly profitable one for the company given the concession because the highway was not expected to be heavily used. -- more

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Mahathir-trees 3 (last) Tanah Rata

As such, the federal and state governments concerned would provide assistance to the company selected.

Earlier, opening the Cameron Highlands Flower Festival '94, Dr Mahathir directed those concerned to cease cutting hillsides for their projects.

He said a hill which was once of great beauty was today almost denuded because of uncontrolled development. He decline to identify the hill.

In this context, he said Malaysians should be thankful of the wealth of trees, hills and highlands still remaining compared with other countries.

"For that reason, I often remind not to cut trees, hills and highlands as you wish for fear that one day when we have lost them we will be forced to go to another country to see the beauty of the environment," he added.

At the opening ceremony, Dr Mahathir also officially named a new orchid hybrid "UMNO Malaysia." A cross between the "Vanda Mevr L Velthine" and "Vanda Gordon Dillion," it had been registered with the Royal Horticultural Society of London.

The hybrid was the creation of Kuala Lumpur orchid enthusiast Wan Chak Chuan.

Dr Mahathir also launched a pictorial entitled "Wonders of the Heartland in Pahang" which depicts the beauty, arts and way of life of the people of the state and attended a briefing on the development of the highlands. -- Bernama

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