

Wanton destruction

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By Syed Nadzri and V. Anbalagan

TANAH RATA, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that certain State Governments were still allowing or carrying out development on hillslopes with scant regard for the environment.

And this, he pointed out, was in spite of repeated reminders from him.

He said some projects, meant to attract visitors, had turned ugly due to the indiscriminate felling of trees and levelling of hills.

"There are also certain State Governments which award licences for logging activities on hillslopes, which cause massive destruction to the environment," he said at a Press conference after launching the Cameron Highlands Flower Festival here.

He was asked to elaborate on his speech during which he expressed regret about the degradation of the environment in the name of development.

"I am quite pleased with Cameron Highlands though, because from the air I could see that not many areas had been destroyed wantonly," said Dr Mahathir, who had arrived from Kuala Lumpur by helicopter.

Asked which State Governments he was referring to, he said there was no need for him to name them.

He said logging activities on the highlands also posed hazards such as when trucks and excavators used by the logging companies travelled on the same narrow roads, thus endangering the lives of other road-users.

"I am worried if we allow the wanton destruction, there will be no more hills left for us. Some countries

feel they are unlucky not to be blessed with hills and mountains.

"And here we are, destroying some of the most beautiful mountain resorts you can find," he added.

Asked whether the Government would introduce more stringent measures to curb the destruction, he said he had given directives on the matter many times before but these seemed to have fallen on deaf ears.

"The directives have not been followed. Some departments are not taking the matter seriously. I have stressed on this many times for many years."

He said development could be allowed on hill resorts and high terrain provided certain conditions pertaining to the preservation of the environment were observed.

In his speech earlier, Dr Mahathir said some hill development taking place defied logic.

"We develop hill resorts for visitors to savour the cool, refreshing atmosphere and to admire nature.

"If we cut down trees and level hillslopes, who's going to come?"

He said this was his first trip to Cameron Highlands after a long while and the third in his lifetime.

"It is a beautiful place. So the people should be thankful they can live here where it is eternally springtime.

"In the temperate countries, you can only experience spring during certain months. But here you can plant flowers all year round and they bloom beautifully," he added.

He was also happy to note that the livelihood of the people here had improved tremendously.

"Those days, the locals were only butlers to the co-

regard for environment

of hills

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Infrastructure assistance for the people

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lonial masters. But now, it is good to see that many have their own enterprises," he added.

The Government, he said, would continue to provide assistance in terms of infrastructure so that the people would be even better off.