

# Only big-time players needed for timber trade

SIBU, Mon. — The timber industry needs big capital to be developed, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, adding that was why the country needs big investors for this sector.

The Prime Minister said only the big-time players were able to come up with the kind of huge investments to help expand the industry.

Dr Mahathir said this when opening the RM120 million Subur Tiasa Particleboard factory here today.

For this reason the Federal Government supports the Sarawak Government's practice of giving timber concessions to big opera-

tors, Dr Mahathir said.

However, Dr Mahathir said certain environmental groups, especially those from the West, were unaware of this and therefore took a negative stand on logging and forest management in Malaysia.

He said the motive of these groups was not to preserve the environment but to prevent Malaysia from competing with them in the international market.

"We don't cut down our forests completely, but do selective logging. As for them (groups), they cut down everything, including the flora and fauna," said Dr Mahathir.

The Subur Tiasa Particleboard factory belongs to

timber giant Rimbunan Hijau Group.

The particleboard factory, which is the first of its kind in the State, boasts state-of-the-art equipment and has a production capacity of about 120,000 cubic metres of particleboards per year of varying thickness.

Among those present at the function were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, his wife Puan Seri Laila, Rimbunan Hijau's chairman/managing director Datuk Tiong Hiew King, State Cabinet Ministers and local dignitaries.

Speaking at a luncheon later to celebrate Rimbunan's 20th anniversary, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia did

not only log its forests but also planted trees in the process to maintain its green cover.

Rimbunan Hijau has a total of about 30,000 workers, including those working in the South Pacific region.

Taib, in his speech, said he was glad to note that the private sector in the timber industry had responded positively to the State Government's call to them to assist in the development of the State.

He stressed that private sector participation was much needed not only to develop the timber industry but the country as a whole.

Taib said over the past 10 years, the State's timber-based downstream industry

had grown from strength to strength, including the use of modern technology to harvest the forest.

Later, at a press conference before leaving for Kuala Lumpur, Dr Mahathir reiterated that the final environmental impact assessment (EIA) report on the proposed RM15 billion Bakun hydroelectric dam project would be available for public viewing.

He said: "Anyone can have a look (at it). We will announce it to all, don't worry about this matter (report)."

"The question of who can approve the EIA report is not important as it will be open for public viewing," he said.