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Mahathir-Danum

DR MAHATHIR SPENDS THE NIGHT AT LEMBAH DANUM

TAWAU, Sept 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali spent the night at the Lembah Danum natural park, Sabah last night and congratulated the staff serving at the forest research centre there.

"Congratulations for your willingness to serve in this remote and quiet place," the Prime Minister noted in the visitors book for dignitaries at the centre before leaving for the town on Sabah's east coast and returning to Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived at the centre by helicopter yesterday, is noted for his concern for the environment and often expressed displeasure when development projects seriously threatened the surrounding environment.

Lembah Danum, which is almost the size of Singapore, is situated about 100km from the nearest town, Lahad Datu. The valley has more than 275 species of birds and 110 species of mammals, including the Asian elephant, orang utan, mousedeer and several other animals.

It is also a protected dipterocarp forest and among the oldest tropical forest in the world. It has the widest floral collection including the Rafflesia

-- the largest flower in the world, and the Bintangor tree, recently found to contain a chemical which may have anti-HIV properties).

The Prime Minister and his wife arrived at the valley yesterday afternoon after attending the 39th National Day celebrations in Kota Kinabalu.

During his 24-hour visit to the valley, Dr Mahathir was given a briefing by Sabah Foundation Group Corporate Advisor, Tengku Datuk Zainal Adlin on measures to conserve the valley undertaken by the Danum Valley Field Centre (DVFC), one of the renowned field centres in Southeast Asia.

Earlier he had taken a walk in the Lembah Danum natural forest including a walk on the canopy bridge, fishing and watching wild animals at night at the Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

This morning, he had a walk around the DVFC and planted a teak tree while Dr Siti Hasmah planted a "sukun" tree.

Later, he left for Tawau to attend a luncheon with Tawau Barisan Nasional leaders hosted by Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Ghapur Salleh before returning to Kuala Lumpur in an executive jet.

Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee who accompanied the Prime Minister during the visit to the valley, was also present at the Tawau Airport to bid farewell to Dr Mahathir and his wife. -- BERNAMA

JS KG AO