

16 FEB 1997

Mahathir-Wildlife

DEVELOPMENT AND WILDLIFE PRESERVATION NEED TO BE BALANCED

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there should be a balance between development and the preservation of wildlife.

"We should have a balance. Don't just say we want to preserve wild animals and not preserve human beings...human beings also need to be preserved," he said when asked to comment on reports that development was depleting wildlife reserves in several states.

Dr Mahathir spoke to reporters after attending the Hari Raya open house of Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Hamid Othman at Jalan Puchong near Petaling Jaya.

A newspaper report today quoted several wildlife experts as urging state governments to maintain wildlife reserves so that animals will not become extinct or embark on mass migration.

The experts said rapid development was taking its toll on wildlife and their habitats and unless efforts were made to conserve them, they might disappear.

Dr Mahathir said: "It's very nice to preserve wildlife but when you are being eaten up by a tiger, you don't say I'm preserving wildlife."

He said unlike the developed countries where animals have become extinct, Malaysia could still conserve animals.

"There are no more wolves in England...a lot of animals have now disappeared in Europe. Those are extinct but, in Malaysia, at least we can keep them and rear them, they are not extinct," he said.

On the calls for state land to be turned into parks, the Prime Minister said to have a state park required a lot of money.

He said the people must be prepared to let the government spend the money to set up such parks and not on other things.

"But you want everything...you want roads, kampung, buildings and (also) want to preserve wildlife.

"Parks cost money. We can do it but don't complain if people don't have the facilities that require the spending of government's money," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and several other ministers, diplomats and government officials also attended the open house of Dr Hamid and his wife Datin Jamilah Mohamed Said. -- BERNAMA

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