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Mahathir-Highlands

HIGHWAY THROUGH HILL RESORTS WITH MINIMAL ENVIRONMENT DAMAGE

GENTING HIGHLANDS, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the proposed highway linking the three leading highland resorts in the Main Range will be carefully mapped and built with minimal damage to the environment.

"It is our intention to build a highway that will link the different mountain resorts in Malaysia along its central spine. We will do that with minimal damage to the environment," he said when launching the Genting skyway, South East Asia's longest monocable car system here today.

Dr Mahathir said the building of the road was to enable the people of Malaysia especially to have access to the highlands and enjoy its beautiful surroundings and the temperate climate.

In order to do this, a little bit of the highlands would have to be sacrificed but the sacrifice must be minimum.

"But it must be a minimum sacrifice, we must not chop down all mountains in order to reach to the top. We should very carefully map out the routes so that we minimise cutting."

"We don't chop down trees carelessly and we are tryin to preserve the environment as much as possible, minimising the sacrifices that we may have to make but maximising the accessibility (of the highlands)," he said.

The proposed highway links Genting Highlands, Fraser's Hill and Cameron Highlands.

Dr Mahathir hoped that those who were very concerned about the environment such as the non-governmental organisations would have a little bit more balanced view and not be fanatical.

"We are not fanatical about development, we don't chop down hills in order to develop."

"We are not fanatical about the environment also. We know that we have to sacrifice something in order to get something else," he said.

Pointing to the lush greenery surrounding the cable car station, the Prime Minister said the area was still very green despite being developed.

In order to make the highlands provide enjoyment that Malaysians seek in other countries, the government had been motivated to make it accessible although some people were against it.

He said it was a rather negative attitude if the people were to be told that the highlands were beautiful but they were not meant to be seen or enjoyed.

"The government thinks that the people of Malaysia must be given the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of this country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was quite sure that a lot of people would like to enjoy the cool climate and beautiful highlands.

"It is no good having all these things but we are not allowed to see or feel the climate."

"It is telling the child that the ice cream is very nice, very cool and very tasty but you cannot taste it ...it must be frustrating for the child," he said.

Similarly, Dr Mahathir said it would be totally meaningless if Malaysians were not able to get to the beautiful places in the country.

Dr Mahathir, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali and guests comprising Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, ministers and deputy ministers then took a ride in the cable car.

The 'Genting Skyway', reputed to be the world's fastest monocable car

system, links Gohtong Jaya to Highlands Hotel, the resort's newest hotel situated 2,000 metres above sea level.

The 3.38 kilometre ride takes about 15 minutes.

Dr Mahathir later witnessed the formal handing over of fire service and rescue responsibilities in Genting Highlands to the government.

The Prime Minister also launched the 888-room Highlands Hotel, bringing the number of hotels at Genting Highlands to five. -- BERNAMA

AFY AZZ AAM