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Hill resorts link will be carefully mapped, says PM

Kamarul Yunus

THE proposed highway linking the three hill resorts - Genting Highlands, Fraser's Hill and Cameron Highlands - will be carefully mapped with minimal damage to the environment, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"We intend to build a highway that will link the different mountain resorts in Malaysia along its central spine," he said, adding that it is to enable people, especially Malaysians, to have access to the highlands and enjoy the beauty and nice cool climate.

"We do that with minimum damage to the environment but there will be some damage ... that is something we have to put up with," he said when launching the a 3.38km Genting Skyway cable car system in Genting Highlands yesterday.

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

"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 trying 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.

Dr Mahathir urged those concerned with the environment, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), not to adopt a fanatical view but to have a balanced view.

As much as the Government wants to spend money, the Government has to sacrifice a little bit of its highlands so that the highlands can provide the public the kind of environment and enjoyment that can be seen and felt in other temperate countries such as in Europe.

"This is what motivated the Government and we are aware some people are against enjoying this highlands beauty and nice cool climate...

"We know we have to sacrifice something in order to get something. I hope the NGOs will take a balanced stand and not a fanatical approach," he said, adding that not all NGOs are no good, while some are too extreme to the extent that they want the people to live on trees rather than having to cut down trees.

He said the NGOs should practise what they preach if they really want to preserve the environment by not cutting trees.

"They themselves build houses by cutting trees but want others to live in a hut built on trees. I would like to see them not chop the trees," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Government wants to develop the highlands to provide an opportunity for ordinary people who cannot afford to go to temperate countries such as Europe to enjoy the beauty.

"Although we have beautiful mountains covered with trees and accompanying nice cool climate, we need to spend and scarifice a little to provide maximum accessibility for the public to enjoy.

"It is no good having all these but we are barred and not allowed to see or feel it. This will be totally meaningless. It is like telling a child about an ice-cream that is nice, cool and tasty but which he cannot savour.

Later, Dr Mahathir witnessed the handing over of responsibilities of Genting Highlands fire station to the local authority by Resorts World Bhd

and launched the new Highlands Hotel.

Besides that, Resorts World also presented the Government with two turntable ladder fire engines as well as a rapid response water tank worth a total sum of RM8 million.

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