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Mahathir-Landscaping

MAKE LANDSCAPING MANDATORY IN ALL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today launched the national tree planting campaign with a call to states and local authorities to make landscaping mandatory in all development projects.

He urged states and local authorities to take landscaping seriously and come up with the necessary legislation.

Launching the campaign at Taman Rekreasi Medan Idaman in jalan Gombak, here, the Prime Minister also urged states and local authorities to have reserve land for landscaping on roadsides.

People owning vacant land near roads and rivers should plant trees on it so that there would be a ready supply of instant trees.

"If the landowners be they local authorities, state governments or individuals or the private sector are not interested in planting trees on their land then they should allow others to do so with only a nominal payment for the land," he said.

Local authorities on the other hand should impose a fine on landowners who refused to allow trees to be planted on their land and instead allowed unsightly undergrowth and bush to grow or turn it into rubbish dumping ground or become the site for squatter houses.

Scenic beauty and pleasant surroundings were now basic needs for the Malaysian society which was becoming prosperous and sophisticated, the Prime Minister said.

Hence a standard should be set and special conditions imposed that there should be vacant land and tree planting as part of development planning, he said.

Apart from housing estates, landscaping and scenic beauty should also be stressed in urban areas, tourist spots and industrial parks, Dr Mahathir said.

He said the task of greening Malaysia was not the sole responsibility of the government but of everyone in the country.

The campaign was carried live over Radio and TV Malaysia.

The Prime Minister urged the corporate sector and individuals to come forward and sponsor neon lighting and landscaping programmes in urban areas and kampungs.

Electricity supplying companies including Independent Power Producers should sponsor neon lighting through low tariffs in collaboration with Tenaga Nasional.

Saying that the landscaping industry in developed countries had progressed rapidly, he said those countries had used the scenic beauty and pleasant surroundings as important components to draw investors and tourists.

Various species of trees were planted in all parts of the country as part of the national tree planting campaign.

Perlis has pledged to plant three million, Trengganu 1.5 million and Negeri Sembilan 50,000 trees and so have the other states between now and the year 2020.

Launching the campaign at Negeri Sembilan level, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad planted the "Merawan Siput Jantan" and his wife Puan Sri Hazizah planted the "Sentang" in the picturesque town of Bahau.

The Menteri Besar hoped Resident Committees in housing estates would encourage the people to plant trees.

District officers in the state planted 10 trees each as part of the campaign.

In Terengganu, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad planted five species of trees at Taman Awam, Padang Hiliran, Kuala Terengganu as part of the state level campaign.

He said the state expected to plant 1.5 million trees by the year 2020.

He urged districts to plant trees as part of efforts to green the country.

Some 200 trees were planted in Kuala Terengganu alone today.

The Menteri Besar also appealed to the people to safeguard the environment and ensure proper landscaping to enhance scenic beauty.

In KANGAR, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said Perlis would plant three million trees by the year 2000.

He said Perlis had already started planting 70,000 trees of various species including teak, sentang, mahogany and teja on road shoulders, on bunds of irrigation canals and in open spaces.

He said government agencies, kampung development and security committees, the public works department and certain associations had planted the trees.

"Most of the trees planted were teak and it is the government's target to plant one million trees a year until 2000," he said after launching the state level tree planting campaign at Taman Ira.

The Menteri Besar also warned that action would be taken against people who damaged the trees.

He said those who were found guilty, could be fined up to RM10,000 for damaging trees with 0.8m circumference while for bigger trees the fine could go as high as RM50,000.

The Menteri Besar also named a road where the launch was held as Peisaran Datuk Ali, after a former Perlis Menteri Besar the late Datuk Ali Ahmad.

In ALOR SETAR, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid launched the campaign in front of the Kuala Kedah Ferry Terminal with a call to the people to beautify their house compounds, villages, districts and the states with flowers and fruit trees.

Sanusi said the government hoped to see landscaped gardens with various fruit trees and flowering plants in every area in the next five years.

He said Kampung Development and Security Committees had been asked to plant trees and landscape river banks.

They were also asked to discuss the progress of the land beautification programme at their monthly meetings and to set up a nursery in each district.

Dr Mahathir planted the "Merawan siput jantan" (*Hopea odorata*). The Recreational Park is the site of the Lee Rubber factory and was selected for the launch in view of its fine landscape.

From an ugly area emitting unpleasant odour, the site had now been greened and landscaped and was a pleasant sight.

Speaking to reporters, the Prime Minister hoped all housing developers would take note of the need for landscaping.

He also said trees which were chopped down for development purposes should be replaced if not at the same spot, elsewhere would also do.

Asked if the tree planting campaign could be a success, he said: "I think we can (achieve the target). If we don't have this thing at all, it is certain our trees will be finished."

Replying to reporters' questions, Dr Mahathir said: "Malaysia need not become a concrete jungle like some other developed countries. They didn't have the advantage of hindsight."

"In some countries along road dividers they erect steel plates to

prevent glare from oncoming vehicles but we plant trees which is much more beautiful and serve the same purpose as a divider and moreover cheaper than erecting steel plates," he added.--BERNAMA

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