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Wildlife

NATIONAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION POLICY NEEDED, SAYS SAM

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- Environmental group Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) today called for a national wildlife conservation policy to be put in place to prevent the further loss of the country's wildlife.

Its president, S.M. Mohammad Idris, said the Protection of Wildlife Act 1972 must be strengthened to protect and permanently preserve existing wildlife habitats and protected areas.

"Currently, there is no provision in the Act to empower the authorities to prevent the conversion of wildlife habitats into areas for development and agriculture," he said in a statement.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said states should strike a balance between development and the protection of wildlife.

"What appears to be happening is that this balance is tilted in favour of development as can be read in newspaper reports concerning the issue," said Mohammad Idris.

Even though SAM had no objection to the concept, he said, the fundamental question to be asked was whether development projects implemented on land which had been taken away benefited the people or the few private developers.

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Malaysia executive director Datuk Dr Mikail Kavanagh Abdullah said the organisation supported Dr Mahathir's call.

"Up to now, wildlife conservation has usually taken a back seat and not received the attention that it deserves," he said. -- BERNAMA

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