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PM: Take care of nature (HL)

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JERANTUT, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged the people to use nature to their advantage in deriving a better income but not at the expense of over-exploiting it.

Describing the environment as one of God's greatest gifts to man, he said nature was capable of making man rich or poor, but this depended greatly on how its resources were tapped.

He reminded the people that in order to ensure continued returns, nature had to be properly cared for and maintained.

In his speech during his visit to Sekolah Kebangsaan Kuala Tahan near here today, Dr Mahathir said: "We have to look after these sources of income (nature) so that it will give us continuous benefits."

For example, he said a tree could only be felled once and once gone, man could no longer derive any benefit from it.

Dr Mahathir said people around the world wanted to come to Malaysia and enjoy its nature and this meant facilities should also be prepared for them.

"This will encourage tourism, and as a result, the income of the people will be boosted," he said, adding that nature was a prized asset.

He reminded the people, however, that if the natural environment was not carefully preserved and maintained, tourists would not come and the people's income would not increase.

While it was the Government's aim to find ways to develop the country, he said this development was not done to benefit the Government itself but to help improve the income of the people.

As an example, he said had tourism not been encouraged, the five floating restaurants in Kuala Tahan today would not have existed, and the income of the people would not have increased.

"However, it is up to the people themselves to put in the effort to increase their own incomes," he added, saying he hoped the people of Pahang for one, would utilise their forests properly for their benefit.

"This will also help increase the size of the middle-class population, especially Bumiputeras."

The Government, he said, could show the way and provide some help in terms of facilities, but the people must put in the effort to help themselves.

Unfortunately he added, some people did not take advantage of the opportunities provided.

Earlier in the morning, the Prime Minister opened the world's longest walkway suspended under the forest canopy at Taman Negara.

(Please see picture on Page 2.)

The 450-metre walkway which is suspended by cables 40 metres above the ground, is the third in the country. The other two are in Poring, Sabah and at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia in Kepong, Selangor.

He also expressed his satisfaction with development which had taken place at the national park, saying much had changed since his last visit 11 years ago.

He added that the influx of tourists had helped increase the income of the local people.

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