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Preserve wildlife within reason: Minister

Kang Siew Li

CULTURE, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said yesterday he fully supports Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call for a balance between development and wildlife preservation in the country.

Speaking to reporters after the weekly Cabinet meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Sabbaruddin said Malaysia should pay little heed to groups from some European countries which constantly harp on wildlife preservation without studying the situation.

"In the end, nothing is done," he said, adding that the exercise in wildlife preservation should be "reasonable".

"This is not to say we (the Government) are not concerned about the forests or the extinction of wild animals, but not to the extent of sacrificing human lives or the country's progress," he said.

He said the Government has to make its own judgement about what is best for the country and the people.

"For example, to show our concern about flora preservation, a total of RM340,000 was spent on the construction of an embankment in order to save a tree (known as Pokok Jelutong) located next to the Kuala Lumpur Tower," he said.

Sabbaruddin said no trees are felled indiscriminately as long as this does not impede the country's development.

He added the Government also takes into consideration the viewpoints of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) if they are registered with the Registrar of Societies.

"We will not accept the views of any NGO which has only a handful of members," he said, adding that they may be exploited by certain individuals with vested interests.

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