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PM: Make landscaping mandatory in all projects

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday launched a nationwide tree planting campaign under the "Landscaping the Nation" programme, with a call to make landscaping mandatory in all development projects.

"Rules and legislation pertaining to landscaping need to be put in place," he said, adding that landscaping is no longer a supporting development aspect, but an important contributor to the tourism industry and economic development.

"What is important is that we must be clever and professional in planning the landscaping of the entire country.

"I urge the state governments and relevant authorities to tackle the landscaping issue more seriously," he said in Kuala Lumpur before planting the "Merawan siput jantan" (*Hopea odorata*) tree at the Medan Idaman Recreational Park at Jalan Gombak, which was formerly the site of the Lee Rubber factory.

A total of three million trees are to be planted under the campaign by the year 2000 and 20 million trees by the year 2020.

Dr Mahathir said besides making it mandatory for developers to landscape and beautify the surroundings of their projects, state governments and local authorities should also reserve land for landscaping on roadsides.

This move will eliminate the damage to trees especially where there are road widening works or the provision of utility infrastructure.

He added that individuals who own land near roads and rivers should plant trees on their vacant land, so that there is a ready supply of "instant" trees.

"If the landowners, be they the local authorities, state governments or the private sector, are not interested in planting trees on their land, then they should allow interested parties to do so and charge them (users of the land) a nominal fee," he said.

He added that landowners, who did not allow their land to be used for the planting of trees but instead left it to be turned into a rubbish dumping ground or become a squatter area, should be fined by the local authorities.

Dr Mahathir said the task of turning Malaysia into a "Green Nation" is not the sole responsibility of the government but everyone in the country.

He urged the private and corporate sectors to come forward and sponsor neon lighting and landscaping programmes in the towns and villages nationwide.

Electricity suppliers including Independent Power Producers should sponsor neon lighting either through low tariffs or paying tariffs to national utility Tenaga Nasional.

Later when speaking to reporters, Dr Mahathir said trees cleared for development will have to be replaced, but not necessarily at the same spot.

"Every tree chopped down must be replaced by two other trees," he said.

Malaysia he said need not become a concrete jungle like some other developed countries.

"In some countries, they erect steel plates along road dividers to prevent the glare from oncoming vehicles but we plant trees that are more beautiful and serve the same purpose but are cheaper," he added.

Asked whether the tree-planting campaign would be a success, Dr Mahathir

said: "Without the campaign, it is certain that all our trees will be cut."

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

Perlis pledged to plant three million trees, Terengganu 1.5 million trees and Negeri Sembilan 50,000 trees between now and the year 2020.

Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad, who planted the "Merawan Siput Jantan" tree in Seremban, 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 Kuala Terengganu, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad planted five species of trees as part of the state-level campaign. Some 200 trees were planted in Kuala Terengganu alone yesterday.

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 the state has 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.

Government agencies, kampung development and security committees, the public works department and certain associations have also planted trees.

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 a 0.8m circumference while for bigger trees, the fine could be as high as RM50,000.

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