

08/11/1998

Industries urged to include waste management in costs

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PORT DICKSON, Sat. - The RM318 million-integrated scheduled waste management centre - the country's first - was today declared open by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who said industries should include waste management in their overhead costs.

Dr Mahathir said the nation's quest for developed status through advances in the industrial sector should be complemented by the appropriate culture which included spending on waste management.

He said some of the sophisticated industries gave rise to problems like the kind of waste generated.

At the same time, the facility to process the waste requires high technology which did not come cheap. Dr Mahathir said this would be reflected in the fees.

Because of this, he said, some factories preferred to store waste on their premises given the savings in expenditure.

However, this practice could be dangerous, he added.

"Factories should consider the payments as part of overhead costs and not seek to cut costs by storing and disposing off waste indiscriminately."

In this context, the Government being mindful of its responsibilities, would be monitoring the situation with regards to those breaking the law.

"The Government will be compelled to act," Dr Mahathir warned. He also acknowledged the need to reduce the high cost of transporting the waste from all over the country to the centre.

The facility, in Bukit Nanas near here, was now fully operational.

It can treat all 107 categories of scheduled waste listed under the Environmental Quality Regulations 1989, except radioactive, pathological and explosive waste.

The project is undertaken by Kualiti Alam Sdn Bhd.

To date, 757 companies of a possible 3,000 had signed up to send waste to Kualiti Alam.

It has collected 63,000 tonnes of scheduled waste against a capacity of 120,000 tonnes.

Also present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad, Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding and Kualiti Alam chairman Tan Sri Razali Ismail.

The Prime Minister also commended the Negri Sembilan Government for accepting the plant to be located here at a time when such a facility was needed but others were not willing to take it.

He was also confident the management would look into the safety aspects of the workers and of the environment.

Speaking to reporters, the Prime Minister was also asked to comment on costs, a recurring issue with the Cabinet having reportedly directed Kualiti Alam to reduce its fees by 10 per cent as an interim measure last year.

Dr Mahathir said he was confident costs could be reduced if all the 3,000 companies used the facility.

"When the facility is fully utilised, costs will go down. But when the plant is not fully utilised, the costs will be high."

In his speech, Razali said about 90 per cent of the steel structure and components for the waste management were made and assembled in Malaysia.

"This is a feat for the local engineering industry," he said.

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