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Mahathir-waste/BM

USE INTEGRATED WASTE TREATMENT, MAHATHIR TELLS FACTORIES

PORT DICKSON, Nov 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today officially commissioned the RM318-million Bukit Nenas integrated waste treatment plant near here and urged factories to incorporate cost of processing scheduled waste as part of their overhead costs.

In his speech at the function he lamented that most factories would still prefer to store their waste at source as this would not incur costly expenditure whereas they should be prepared to set aside funding for their waste treatment.

In this context, he urged factories to make full use of the facilities at the Bukit Nenas integrated centre for scheduled waste management.

The prime minister reminded them: "The government will monitor and is hoping that industries will not avoid using the centre to cut costs. The government will act against industries disposing off scheduled waste in an unlawful manner."

The Bukit Nenas complex, 22 km from here, is the country's first such integrated centre to treat scheduled waste and was built in July 1995 and completed last June.

It went partially operational in October 1996 and is in full operation now run by Kualiti Alam Sdn Bhd which has been granted a 15-year concession to treat all the 107 scheduled waste listed under the Environmental Quality Regulation (Scheduled Waste) 1989 except for radioactive, pathological and explosive waste.

Dr Mahathir said the government was duty-bound to put up centres to treat industries' scheduled waste so as not to endanger the public but at times there were people who acted irresponsibly in disposing off industrial waste.

"We need to cultivate a culture compatible with the national aspiration to develop highly sophisticated industries," he said.

Disposal of scheduled waste was not much a problem when Malaysia was previously an agricultural country but as it was headed for industrialisation, industries should be willing to spend on treating industrial scheduled waste, he said.

However since industries were scattered nation-wide and their distance from an integrated treatment plant made transportation of waste increasingly costly, he said.

As such the prime minister called for a cheaper and safer mode of waste transportation since it would be quite impossible to put up integrated waste treatment centres like the one at Bukit Nenas at several other locations.

Dr Mahathir said the high charges for waste treatment at the Bukit Nenas integrated centre was due to the high technology it adopted for its operations.

"And high technology is expensive," the prime minister said.

Investors intending to inject capital in Malaysia would have to take into account the site of the centre as locating their industries near it would give them cost advantage, he said

At first the government had difficulty in choosing a site to build the integrated centre while at the same time it acknowledged that such a facility was crucial to the country, he said.

Dr Mahathir expressed confidence that residual waste at the centre

would not be discarded to nearby canals and rivers as this would not only threaten aquatic life there but also pose health and other hazards to residents.

When approached by reporters later, Dr Mahathir said the integrated centre is 100 per cent environmentally non-polluting.

On industries asking the centre to reduce rates for waste disposal, the prime minister said it was up to them and Kualiti Alam to negotiate.

"I'm confident that costs could be slashed down if all the 3,000 industries emitting scheduled waste use the centre allowing it to run full capacity.

"But when there are factories refusing to use it, the costs would remain high because of non-optimum use of the facilities," he said.

Dr Mahathir said so far 757 of about 3,000 industries nation-wide which emit scheduled waste have entered into agreement with Kualiti Alam Sdn Bhd to send their waste for treatment there.

Kualiti Alam Sdn Bhd managing director Zainol Rashid Zainuddin said so far the centre had collected 63,000 metric tonnes of scheduled waste which he described as a very low volume compared to the centre's actual capacity

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

-- BERNAMA

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