

06 OCT 1999

Ting-Trees

GOVT CONCERNED OVER SLACKENING PACE IN GREENING CAMPAIGN

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- The target of planting three million trees by the end of next year may not be reached if special efforts are not made to give the government's greening campaign a push, a minister said today.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said although the government was satisfied that 1.6 million trees were planted in 1997 and 1998, there was now cause for concern as only 220,794 trees were planted in the first half of this year.

"If special efforts are not made from now, I fear that the target to plant three million trees by the year 2000 will not be achieved. My worry is that if the first six months' figure is not encouraging, there is a possibility the second half will be the same," he told reporters here.

The campaign, aimed at making Malaysia a "Garden Country" by the year 2005, was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in March 1997. That year, 575,572 trees or 76.74 percent of the targeted 750,000 were planted in a nine-month period.

Dr Ting said the campaign recorded a 149 percent achievement rate last year with the planting of 1,117,652 trees, exceeding the target of 750,000 trees a year.

He said Johor planted 340,104 trees, surpassing the 330,000 target for 1997 and 1998, while seven other states achieved more than 50 percent of the target.

Sabah had the lowest planting rate at only 19 percent of the target, he said.

He said the National Landscaping Department, which is monitoring the campaign, would contact states which have yet to meet their targets to ensure more trees could be planted.

The drop in the number of trees planted this year could be because state governments were preoccupied with implementing economic recovery measures, he said.

Dr Ting urged the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to cooperate with the government to make the campaign a success.

-- BERNAMA

RZS YBY