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`Spare the people future problems of development'

ALOR STAR, Sun. - The Sultan of Kedah today called on the State Government to make it compulsory for all developers to prepare a detailed Social Impact Assessment report before future projects are approved.

He said such reports were needed to avoid causing unnecessary problems to residents.

Saying the omission of such reports could lead to the destruction of society, the Sultan said:

"Often, it is the people who have to adapt to the situation when development takes place.

"The people have to accept development whether they like it or not and this situation is not healthy.

"It could lead to social destruction later ... in fact this is already happening in some western countries," he said.

The Sultan was delivering a speech at his 71st birthday investiture ceremony at Istana Anak Bukit near here.

Present were the Sultanah of Kedah, Raja Muda and Raja Puan Muda and Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid.

Topping the list of award recipients at the ceremony was Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman who received the Datuk Paduka Seri Setia Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah which carries the title of Datuk Paduka.

Others included the senior board member of NEC Corporation, Mitsui & Co. Ltd, Dr Tadahihiro Sekimoto.

He was awarded the Datuk Setia di-Raja Kedah award, which carries the title of Datuk.

State Executive Council members V. Saravanan, Fong Chok Gin and Ghazali Ibrahim were also given the award. They were among 30 people who were given the title Datuk.

In his speech, the Sultan also called on the people to adapt to changing times by maintaining a positive attitude.

He said the people would not gain anything if they gave up easily or became dismayed when faced with new or tougher challenges.

"We have gone through tough times in the past and will be facing a lot more challenges in times to come.

"One of the challenges is globalisation.

"It is only appropriate that the people maintain a positive attitude in facing such challenges," he said, adding that the people should also be more pro-active and creative in facing new challenges.

Earlier in his speech, Sanusi said the State Government was forced to defer or cancel development projects which had been planned when the country was hit by economic problems.

He said it was fortunate Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had introduced several measures to insulate the economy from further attacks by foreign currency traders.

"History has proved brave steps must be taken when one is faced with such a situation," he said, adding that the currency traders should consider themselves lucky the Malaysian Government only introduced exchange rate controls.

On another note, Sanusi said various steps to improve the industrial, agriculture and fisheries sectors in the State had been taken.

He said measures taken to boost the tourism industry had also shown

results, with tourist arrivals to Langkawi gradually increasing.

A total of 1.45 million people visited the island last year and the figure is expected to increase to 1.55 million this year.

"We are very optimistic the `Jom Pi Kedah '99' campaign to attract visitors to the State will succeed."

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