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Three million trees target may not be achieved

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IPOH, Fri. - The Federal Government's objective of planting some three million trees by the end of next year may not be achieved in view of the waning interest of State Governments in the project.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said after a great start, there seemed to be a decline in interest among the States with only 21.14 per cent of the targeted 750,000 trees for this year planted nationwide between January and June.

Only Selangor and Terengganu have achieved 50 per cent of their targets while most other States have only managed 20 per cent or less, up to June.

Speaking to reporters after visiting Phui Ying National Type Primary School in Simpang Pulai, he said this could be due to various reasons.

"Most State Governments may be concentrating on projects which can stimulate the economy, while others may have other priorities," he said.

Ting also said that at least two States did not submit their reports on the project to the National Landscape Department every three months as required. He, however, did not name the two States.

He said the reports were important to enable the department to monitor the progress of the project and to embark on remedial measures.

He said the department would check with State Governments which had not achieved their targets to find out if any solution could be found.

The department will also approach States which have failed to submit their reports to find out the problems they were facing.

He said State Governments were required to plant between 5,000 and 90,000 trees depending on the population to improve the country's landscape.

The target nationwide is 750,000 trees a year until next year.

Ting said when the project was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in March 1997, the response was tremendous with various groups including the private sector taking part.

A total of 672,672 trees were planted then with 89 per cent of the target achieved.

Last year, all the States had exceeded the target set by planting a total of 1.17 million trees nationwide, achieving a 149 per cent success rate.

Several corporate bodies including Projek Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan, the developer of the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and housing developers also contributed to the cause.

Ting said grants for this purpose given to State Governments could be withdrawn if they did not try to work towards achieving their targets.

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