

A record to make others turn green

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PM successfully leads planting of 100,000 trees in 60 seconds

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun: A new Malaysian record was set at 9.35am today when 100,000 trees were planted simultaneously by thousands of Malaysians throughout the country in one minute.

The Millennium Tree Planting effort secured a place in the Malaysia Book of Records, and may get into the Guinness Book of World Records as well.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad led the event by planting a Millennium Tree, a *kapur* tree (*dryobalanops aromatica*), at the new Bukit Jalil Park in conjunction with World Habitat Day 2000. He also opened the 20.23ha park.

An estimated RM1 million was spent on acquiring 30 different species of the 100,000 trees, 333 of which were planted at the park.

Simultaneous planting took place in Perak (12,000), Johor and Selangor (11,500 each), Sabah and Sarawak (9,000 each), Kedah (8,000), KL and Kelantan (7,000 each), Pahang and Penang (6,000 each), Terengganu and Negri Sembilan (4,000 each), Malacca (3,000) and 1,000 trees in Perlis and Labuan.

The planting efforts in the states were led by the respective Mentris Besar and Chief Ministers.

In his speech, Mahathir said hills and trees should be maintained as part of the natural landscape in any kind of development.

"This will avoid wastage and double work of clearing land and then re-planting for landscaping purposes.

"Developers should try to build around hills and trees by incorporating them into their development plans," he said, citing as example a hotel room in Langkawi which had a tree growing through its floor.

Urging Malaysians to landscape their homes, Mahathir said such activity was not limited to the rich and that others can achieve beautiful creations with a little effort.

"We will not be able to fully appreciate greenery until we see desert or barren land like in the Middle East which haj pilgrims see during their journey.

"Such surroundings are not only searing hot but also very harsh on our eyes. City Hall will create another four parks for city dwellers," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Mahathir said that although tree-planting will be an annual event, people should do it on their own initiative.

On negative foreign reports of Malaysia's conservation efforts, he said any foreign reports on Malaysia should be dismissed completely.

"Many foreigners have come up to me saying that they stopped reading foreign reports on Malaysia because the

situation was not what they found here and that it was foreign propaganda," he said.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said the tree-planting ceremony was jointly organised by the ministry's National Landscaping Department, Malaysian Nature Society (Tree Planting Group) and City Hall.

He said the ministry has been given the responsibility of a "National Focal Point" in the implementation of the habitat agenda of the UN Centre for Human Settlements.

The agenda's main target includes creating comprehensive and quality facilities and environment for everyone.

"I appeal to all state governments and local authorities to allocate more new sites to be preserved as parks and green lungs.

"I'm confident that with our development of landscape and public parks, Malaysia can become a Garden Nation by the year 2005," he said.

The National Tree-planting Campaign launched in 1997 targets three million trees to be planted by this year.

More from the Net

World Habitat Day websites

www.unchs.org/unchs/english/whd2000/celebrations.html