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Mahathir-Hills

MAINTAIN HILLS AND TREES IN IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that hills and trees should be maintained when projects like housing are implemented.

He said that projects could be implemented without hills being levelled and trees felled if the foundation for the buildings to be constructed was strong enough and taking into account the slope of the hills.

This would help preserve the existing natural landscape, he said when launching the "New Millennium Tree Planting" event at the Bukit Jalil Park, here.

He said that the present practice was that hills were levelled and trees felled and landscaping carried out on completion of the projects.

"This involves double work...one to fell trees and level the hills and then later to build hillocks and plant trees because we also love the sight of hills and hillocks," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this was a waste and it would have been better to maintain the hills and the trees and to take them into account in the implementation of the projects.

He said that it was not necessary to fell all the trees as some of them were old species and some over 100 years old.

The prime minister however said he was happy that there were still parties in the country who listen to advice given by the government on matters to preserve the natural environment including protecting the trees.

He cited Langkawi as an example where hotel operators had allowed trees to grow exceeding the level of the hotel rooms and where trees were allowed to grow through the floor of some houses.

"This attracts interest because this kind of thing makes tourists want to come to the hotel again and again and love the trees not found in their countries.

"So therefore, by maintaining the hills and the trees we don't lose anything and instead have much to gain," he said.

As such, Dr Mahathir said, the government had been encouraging the planting of trees and carrying out beautiful landscaping to enable Malaysia to become an attractive garden nation.

Dr Mahathir said that trees and plants should also be grown in the compound of houses not only for purposes of beautification but for additional income especially from potted plants and herbs.

Landscaping in residential areas was also essential, he said, because it was good for the health.

The prime minister said views had been expressed that the planting of trees would cause too much rain but he felt a drought would be much worse.

"Therefore, we should appreciate the high volume of rainfall in the country. Tourists from countries where there are not many trees are awed by our greenery.

"We ourselves never appreciate our greenery until we visit the deserts," he said.

The prime minister said that the increase in the world population which had reached six billion had also created a greater need for living space and as such vast areas of jungle had been cleared and trees felled.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia had achieved rapid growth but such progress did not mean that the environment had been neglected.

He called on all parties like the Kuala Lumpur City Hall to take the initiative to develop parks when the current price of land was low.

On the planting of 100,000 trees simultaneously in one minute, Dr Mahathir said this proved that Malaysians could do anything they set their mind to, in line with the slogan "Malaysia Boleh" (Malaysia Can).

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said that developers could actually derive greater profit if they implement their projects without levelling the hills as buyers love such areas.

"But they have to be really good at landscaping, construction of roads, arrangement of the housing units and have a very good foundation...not like the Highland Towers...they did not do it properly," he said, referring to the highrise condominium block in Hulu Kelang here which collapsed on Dec 11, 1993 and claimed 48 lives.

The prime minister said that in the country, the soil was soft and waterlogged unlike in some countries with granite soil which makes it easier for construction.

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