

# WHAT A SHAME

STAR

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## Dr M laments public apathy towards clean environment

By SA'ODAH ELIAS

PUTRAJAYA: Public apathy towards cleanliness, environment and landscape is still high, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said although there had been a marked improvement in their awareness over the last few years, there was a need for greater commitment on these matters.

"Showing concern for a clean environment and mother nature is proof of a higher civilisation which should be in line with the progress achieved by the country thus far.

"A race with pride will take interest in what they display to the world and failure or shortcomings in whatever aspects will definitely cause them embarrassment.

"The failure of a race to create a good environment to live in does not only reflect their inferior civilisation but also their low potential for progress in other fields," he said when launching the Fourth National Landscape Day.

Dr Mahathir said if they were not ashamed of this inferiority, they would be unable to assess the difference between them and those who were more civilised.

He said Malaysians should feel ashamed if their civilisation was so inferior that they were unable to differentiate

between what was clean and beautiful and what was dirty and ugly.

Even those living in highrise buildings, he said, could contribute in this beautification effort by planting suitable plants and flowers outside their windows.

"But Malaysian architects have yet to learn to incorporate window flower boxes when they are designing high-rise buildings. I am confident that in future, they will learn how to introduce features that can enable high-rise dwellers plant flowers," he added.

Dr Mahathir criticised developers who took the easy way out by just levelling small hills and filling up the valleys in between these hills.

The valleys, he said, served as holding ponds for rain water which would later be carried off through small streams to the river and the sea.

"If they are filled up, rain water will accumulate somewhere upriver and when it is too high, it will flood the original area.

"This phenomenon can sometime damage the foundation of buildings in the affected area," he said.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said developers were required to maintain the original topography and contour of the land to minimise future environmental problems.

## New rules will also protect landscapes

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The newly-introduced regulations, he said, were also aimed at preventing property development projects from marring the aesthetic value of their surroundings.

He said the Town and Country Planning Department and all local authorities had been directed to enforce the new regulations immediately.

This year's National Landscape Day themed "Love Our Landscapes" is aimed at promoting appreciation of beautiful landscapes and the natural environment in line with the aspiration to turn the country into a garden nation by 2005.

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