

18/10/2001

Dr M: Protecting nature remains a challenge

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The challenge still remains for Malaysians to protect nature while meeting economic demands, and the management of forests entails this balancing act.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said although forestry products had been a major contributor to export earnings, nature must be protected to ensure adequate water resources, biodiversity and environmental stability.

"This shall remain the core challenge of all Malaysians," Dr Mahathir said in his foreword in the pictorial book Sustaining Our Green Heritage, which was launched today in conjunction with the 100-year anniversary celebration of the Forestry Department.

The book, a chronical of 100 years of forestry activities in Peninsular Malaysia, depicts the age-old poetic, cultural and economic relationship between man and forest through pictures and essays.

It also details milestones of the Forestry Department through the years, from the appointment of its first forest officer in Oct 16, 1901, to its recent launching of three commemorative stamps.

Dr Mahathir said the book was an important historical document as it showcased the Government's care for the preservation of the environment. He also praised its depiction of the nation's green heritage, and called the book "a legacy" for future generations.

The Forestry Department turned 100 yesterday.

Peninsular Malaysia's forest is home to 8,000 species of flowering plants, 2,680 tree species, more than 200 species of mammals, 600 species of birds, 110 species of snakes and thousands of insect species.

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