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Johor receives 'green' award.

Sim Bak Heng

JOHOR Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman's holistic approach to greening the State has paid off.

Johor beat all other States to win the "Special National Landscape Award 2001" recently.

Johor Menteri Besar received the award from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on behalf of the State Government.

The award is handed out for overall best performance in tree-planting, landscaping and commitment of local authorities to creating "green lungs" throughout Johor.

Winning the award was not an easy task, said State Local Government Committee chairman Datuk Jimmy Low.

"It involves years of planning, collective efforts as well as continuous monitoring by various State authorities," he said.

Low said the award also testifies to the State's commitment to greening the environment and enforcing laws to ensure greenery is maintained.

The State Budget, he added, also pledges a "Garden State" by 2005.

"Just look at our tree-planting programme, we are so much ahead of other States in the number of trees planted per year.

The State annual target is 80,000 trees. Johor planted 70,703 trees in 1997, 92,513 trees in 1998 and 56,965 trees in 1999.

The target was revised last year to 90,000 trees and Johor successfully planted 88,316 trees.

Low added that the State Government has made it compulsory for local authorities to submit their respective landscaping masterplans to the Landscape Department for review and allocations on an annual basis.

The masterplan should be submitted early in the year and should highlight areas identified for landscaping, ways to landscape a particular area and the types and number of trees to be planted.

The systematic approach helped ensure a smooth implementation of the greening programme.

"This is a new ruling in our efforts to green the environment and create a more healthy State.

"It is also a follow-up after having won the award. We cannot be complacent but must work hard to improve our performance," he said.

This year, the State Government planned to plant more trees, set up urban forests in each district and expand its "avenue desa" programme for more trees along rural roads.

Johor currently has two urban forests - in Johor Baru and Gunung Lambak, Kluang - and 10 recreational forests in the State.

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