

Dr M: Give more priority to landscaping efforts

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KUALA LUMPUR: Property developers have been urged to give more priority to landscaping to support government efforts to make Malaysia a garden nation by 2005.

In making the call, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said giving landscaping would also directly benefit developers, as the value of their properties would increase significantly.

He noted that proponents of new projects were more environmentally friendly and would not just chop down trees and level the hills but would instead suit the design of their projects

according to the existing landscape.

"This is a very positive development. I am happy that the awareness on the need to preserve the natural environment and enhancing its beauty are beginning to catch on with the cross section of the society.

"When we have beautiful environment, people will be less likely to litter and will be more willing to contribute towards the government beautification projects," he said when launching the national landscaping day at the Esplanade in Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

He expressed satisfaction that the government's call for people to take part in efforts to make the country a garden nation has received overwhelming support.

"If we look around us we can see how things have changed. Most of the available land in the city of Kuala Lumpur is now beautifully landscaped.

"Even our highways have become beautiful, graced by all kinds of multi-coloured flowering plants," he said adding that many foreign visitors to the country have expressed their admiration for the beauty of the environment.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting later told a

press conference that as an early step to achieve "Garden Nation" status, the Government launched a community awareness campaign to promote landscaping efforts amongst Malaysians.

Called the "Garden Nation in Bloom" programme, he said the role of the community in taking part in landscaping was important to achieve the status.

"The success of such a programme would depend on the co-operation between individuals, private and public sector to participate in landscaping and beautifying projects," he said.

He also said the state governments have agreed to hold Landscape Day celebrations at state level as part of the efforts to promote landscaping, adding that the winners of the National Landscape Competition 2001 should be commended on their contribution towards landscaping.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir received the official Guinness Book of World Records award for the country's achievement in planting the most number of trees in the shortest time possible.

Ong said on Oct 15 2000, 110,461 trees were planted simultaneously at 1,500 stations nationwide, under the "Millennium Planting" programme.