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PM pleased with Paya Indah progress

Deborah Loh; Shamini Darshni

DENGKIL, Sun. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today toured the Paya Indah Wetlands on horseback and said he was pleased with the park's progress since he launched it a year ago.

The Prime Minister, who often rides at the park, said Paya Indah today was a place where people could enjoy the outdoors.

"It's much better than when it started. Now there are a lot of trees and it's neater," he said at a Press conference on the park.

"The lakes are looking fine and people can paddle around, except in the the ones where the hippos and crocodiles are, of course."

On Oct 13 last year, Dr Mahathir declared the wetland park open after seven years of rehabilitation work to salvage the 3,100-hectare site from the effects of mining and logging.

The park now boasts peaceful lotus-filled lakes, a variety of other wet-land vegetation, and many species of birds.

Paya Indah is the nearest eco-tourism attraction to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Putrajaya and Cyberjaya.

Asked if the Government had further plans for Paya Indah, Dr Mahathir said it would be costly to implement them.

"There are suggestions, but they are costly. Even if we get the private sector in, it will cost them a lot," he said.

Dr Mahathir arrived at the park early this morning to launch the Paya Indah CrossCountry Run in conjunction with the park's first anniversary.

He then went riding for over an hour before witnessing the handing over of electrical trams from Tenaga Nasional Bhd to Paya Indah.

TNB has given five non-polluting 'E-Trams' to ferry visitors around the sprawling park.

The trams were handed over by TNB chairman Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis to Paya Indah Wetlands chief executive officer Muralee Menon.

Dr Mahathir later witnessed the release of a pair of Manchurian, or Red Crown cranes from northern China, from quarantine into the park.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Law Hieng Ding received the cranes from the Chinese Ambassador to Malaysia, Guan Deng Ming.

The cranes are part of a government-to-government exchange in which Malaysia presented China with two tapirs.

Asked about plans for a new national zoo in the Dengkil-Sepang area, Dr Mahathir said the Government could not afford to have two zoos.

"We have asked Zoo Negara (in Ampang) to move here, but they don't want to," he said.

"We would like to have a zoo here (in Dengkil) as there is enough land and the place is quite suitable."

Meanwhile, Law said his ministry would look into a new national zoo if there is interest from the private sector.

"If there are interested parties we will look into it," he said.

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