

PM: Have balance in conserving natural heritage

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PUTRAJAYA: Malaysians must preserve their sense of balance in conserving the country's natural heritage.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, where possible, Malaysians must strive to avoid cutting down trees.

"For instance, the Government advised builders to buy rock such as granite and limestone from poorer countries, rather than use our own as a resource.

"It's a bit selfish, but we have the money and can afford slightly higher prices for our homes.

"But we cannot preserve nature at the expense of those who live at the edge of forests, who are threatened every day by animals such as tigers," he said in his speech when launching the Malaysian Nature Society Millennium Fund at Putrajaya Marriot Hotel here last night.

Malaysians, therefore, could only afford a few fanatics in conserving the environment, but the rest must be moderate, he said.

Dr Mahathir also warned unscrupulous parties, which cut down trees for pure profit.

"These trees take 200 to 300 years to grow and it is a sacrilege to cut them down.

"But sometimes, we have to sacrifice part of our heritage to create new land and space.

"Unfortunately, there are some who cut more than the limit we have put," he said.

He said that Malaysia was still 50% covered in forest.

Some countries, he added, were not so lucky, as their people had denuded their forests when conservation was yet to become an issue.

"But we still have time," he said.