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Mahathir-Conservation

DR MAHATHIR CALLS FOR BALANCED APPROACH IN NATURE CONSERVATION

PUTRAJAYA, July 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight told Malaysians to be thankful for living in a country blessed with so much natural beauty but reminded that nature conservation must be balanced with the developmental needs of the country.

He said people should not harbour fanatical stands over nature but should instead be moderate in their views vis-a-vis the safeguarding of the national heritage.

Dr Mahathir said being Prime Minister of the country, he needed to give equal attention to other interests apart from nature preservation, such as providing people with land to build houses on and for cultivation to sustain a living.

"We must conserve nature, our forests, seas, hills and mountains and all the beautiful places that we have. But we must be prepared to make sacrifices," he said when launching the Malaysian Nature Society's (MNS) Millennium Fund here.

The fund was created in 1999 to provide the financial means to MNS to undertake more grassroot and awareness projects as well as carry out conservation and education work.

Dr Mahathir, who is also patron of the Millennium Fund, provided an amusing example on the need to be practical in the approach towards preserving nature.

He said that by disallowing the killing of tigers, its numbers had increased as a result but by nature, the beasts would attack or eat humans just like what had been reported in the East Coast.

"It is difficult to tell a man who is a victim that 'you should be proud for preserving the tiger'. So we need to have a sense of balance," he said.

In addition, Dr Mahathir said those involved in the timber industry could be quite unscrupulous in that they would fell trees more than what was allowed.

Conceding that the government could not supervise such activities all the time, the Prime Minister nevertheless said that Malaysia was still a green country.

He said Malaysians living in cities also took heed of calls for them to grow plants and trees in their backyard so much so that visitors to the country would remark how green a big city like Kuala Lumpur was.

This, he said, showed that the government was successful in undertaking the greening of the country.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir appealed to donors to contribute generously to the fund for the sake of the future generation.

"We still have time to help preserve our heritage, our forests, animals, flowers. Let's conserve all that we have inherited from the past so that the future generations can continue to enjoy what we have enjoyed," he added.

Also present was the Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AO