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Japanese out to green Malaysia in honour of Dr M

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DUNGUN, Mon. - A high regard for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has brought a Japanese used-car dealer all the way from Toyota City in Japan to Malaysia to plant trees.

Masahiko Inoe, president of Routes Co Ltd of Japan, is bent on greening the earth with trees, and chose Malaysia to start his project simply because he likes Dr Mahathir.

"Dr Mahathir is a good leader and is a friend of Japan. Your Prime Minister is highly respected in my country and both countries have developed a special relationship in many areas.

"Routes' tree planting project in Terengganu will be the beginning of more of our support for similar projects in future. We have initiated a move to collect funds in Japan to buy and plant trees here," he said.

Inoe said Routes had a chain of six You's Net's used-car outlets in Japan which had achieved annual sales of 1,500 cars of various Asian and continental models.

Under a scheme he has devised, for each car sold, an equivalent of RM16 would be set aside to buy a tree. The company now has RM24,000 to buy trees recommended by the Forestry Department.

Inoe and his delegation of 15 youths from Japan planted 17 timber species, including cengal (*Neobalanocarpus heimii*), kapur (*Dryobalanops aromatica*) and meranti kepong (*Shorea ovalis*) near the Central Terengganu Development Authority (Ketengah) building.

He also said the tree planting project was to mark his company's 30th anniversary celebration in 2006.

In May, Inoe said Routes planted 135 trees at Sekolah Kebangsaan Kubang Kuau in Rantau Panjang, Kelantan, but this time, the company plans to buy more trees.

Ketengah deputy general manager Abdul Ghani Che Man said the areas would be turned into a botanical garden and a recreational park. "We are supportive of their effort as it is in line with our landscape project," he said.