

**Najib Calls For A New Respect For The Environment**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak Tuesday called on world leaders to inculcate a new respect for the environment, saying the people and the future generations depend on it.

The prime minister said this would require a change, not just in organisational culture but also mindset.

"Our local Cengal tree, like California's Redwoods, may take centuries to reach its humongous size. But it can be felled in less than a few hours by an unscrupulous timber contractor with a chainsaw.

"Until we understand instinctively that sacrificing such resources for short-term benefit undermines our long-term aims, we cannot hope to achieve truly sustainable development.

"This same principle applies in regional and global policies, too," he said when opening the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Regional Forum on Environment and Health in Southeast and East Asian Countries, in the capital.

Also present at the event were Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam, World Health Organisation Regional Director for the Western Pacific Dr Shin Young-soo and Regional Director for the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Dr Young-Woo Park.

Najib said that as Southeast Asian nations remained a byword for dynamic and expansive growth, it was incumbent on each of the nations to argue for more sustainable economic development within their own borders.

He said the move was to ensure that all (Southeast Asian nations) would enjoy the benefits of the shared resources - the water, land and air.

He noted that six steps could be undertaken in order to bring environmental health within the development plans - analysing the links between environmental health and development; prioritising environmental health issues within the larger development objective; assessing the institutional mandates, capacity, regulations, budgets and enforcement relating to environmental health.

Ensuring adequate financing of environmental health interventions based on the above assessments; monitoring process and outcome indicators to continuously improve policy design and implementation; and making stakeholder involvement and participation of non-governmental organisations (NGO) and world leaders to give voice and influence to the vulnerable in the communities.

Najib said Malaysia was one of the seven countries identified in the Asian Development Bank 2050 Report as an emerging star, and its development would inevitably put new pressures on its rivers, land, air and seas.

Since 1992, Malaysia had implemented the National Policy on the Environment, working to

conserve its natural heritage through enforcement, research, education and public awareness.

He said high-impact economic development projects were subjected to mandatory environmental and health-impact assessments and the country had developed the Malaysian Environmental Performance Index which aimed to help make sense of the ever-growing body of environmental data.

"The index provides a clear structure with a set of quantitative indicators for environmental policy-making, with peer-group benchmarking to identify best practices.

"As new scientific methods and reporting standards yield ever more detailed environmental data, such comparisons can help us ensure our policy-making is keeping pace with our development," he said.

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