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POLICY UNITES ALL STATES IN CONSERVATION EFFORTS

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the Malaysian Forestry Policy launched yesterday will witness all states coming together on the country's forest which is now 120 years old.

He said all states have agreed to adopt the policy which outlined a clear direction for the forestry sector in facing new challenges at domestic and international levels at the 78th National Land Council (MTN) meeting held on Jan 29.

"I would like to emphasise that the Malaysian Forestry Policy is our shared policy. We must all act and play a more active role as conservation agents and drivers of the country's socio-economic development.

"I hope that the joint efforts of the federal and state governments in implementing the five objectives of the Malaysian Forestry Policy will continue to be strong, to achieve the desired targets," he said in his speech before launching the Malaysian Forestry Policy in conjunction with the 2021 National-level International Day of Forests here yesterday.

Also present was the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Datuk Seri Dr Shamsul Anuar Nasarah, with the virtual attendance of menteri besar and chief ministers.

Muhyiddin also admitted that in order to achieve the goal of becoming a developed country, development is inevitable, but in this case, he stressed that the

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— **Muhyiddin Yassin**



MUHYIDDIN (left) with Dr Shamsul watering Resak trees at the Kepong Botanical Garden, Forest Research Institute Malaysia. Photo: Bernama

government is very serious in managing forests responsibly and sustainably in implementing conservation programmes.

"As a responsible and caring government, various efforts were taken to fulfil the commitment pledged during the Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro,

Brazil by mainstreaming biodiversity management in national development.

"Of the total forested areas in Malaysia, only 1.7 percent are degraded forest areas. Since 2016, a total of 1,859 hectares of degraded areas have been reforested with an allocation of

RM152.82 million," he said.

The prime minister said the cost of maintaining and preserving the country's forest areas which cover 55.3 percent or 18.27 million hectares of the country's land area is enormous and about RM6 billion is needed for the purpose.

He said towards this direction, various special financial instruments were created including the National Conservation Trust Fund for Natural Resources, Forest Development Trust Fund under the state governments in Peninsular Malaysia and the latest, the Malaysia Forest Fund (MFF) which was established last year.

Muhyiddin said through MFF, the country is expected to receive USD100 million (RM400 million) in the next seven years which would be channeled to state governments for the conservation of forest including social forest to raise the socio-economic standard of Orang Asli and the local communities.

As a record, he said based on the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) report, Malaysia is among the 25 developing countries which have high forest cover and low deforestation activities.

The prime minister also expressed his appreciation of the commitment of state governments in gazetted sensitive environmental areas as permanent forest reserve, protected areas, Wildlife Reserve and areas of international interest.

At the same time, he also called on state governments to step up efforts to gazette and maintain forest areas as Central Forest Spine (CFS) and Heart of Borneo (HoB).

"The Fourth National Physical Plan (RFN4), which is being finalized, is also placing emphasis on CFS to ensure the continuity of forest landscape through the setting up of new ecological corridor.

"This approach is capable of reducing the conflict between humans and wildlife as well as to enable the free movement of wildlife, especially national iconic species which are facing extinction," he said. — Bernama