

PM blasts development critics for hypocrisy

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By OUR REPORTER

THE Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, yesterday blasted development critics, particularly conservationists, for their hypocrisy over environmental and poverty issues.

The crux of the matter is that Malaysians cannot expect to enjoy a good lifestyle "without paying for the goodies," he said.

Opening the annual meeting of the Association of Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Malaysia (ACC-CIM), Dr Mahathir described the critics of development as "quite intelligent Malaysians with a certain degree of naivete."

"They say that we can have the standard of living similar to that of developed countries and we can have that for free.

"These people also demand that we have the best of everything, the best schools, hospitals, pay schemes, pensions, environment and that we preserve our forest, historical buildings.

"In addition we should lower taxes, pay no tolls, work shorter hours, throw out local and for-

ign investors and everything that may raise money for the nation and the government," he added.

"The fact is, even if we want them we have to pay for them. The payments may not be direct but in the end we must pay.

"If we want to preserve Malaysia in its natural state with its tropical forests, animals and attap huts, then we must be prepared to live without the amenities that we now take for granted. This is the price we have to pay," he said.

He described as "most detestable" the way city dwellers earning fat salaries shed tears over the way the countryside had been spoilt and the bucolic life of the peasants disturbed.

"In the same breath they would lament over rural poverty and after they have shed the crocodile tears, they would retreat to the air-conditioned comforts of their city houses and offices," he said.

But being a relatively poor country, Malaysia could not afford certain things developed countries could. The people would have to pay for progress because po-

verty could only be defeated if enough people "made money legitimately" and paid taxes to enable the government to launch development schemes to upgrade the productivity of the poor.

Dr Mahathir said that the sole solution to poverty was increased productivity by the poor and the government would not deflect from this approach in eradicating poverty.

"Dole does not eradicate poverty. Like drugs, it reduces people to becoming dependents."