

'Poor must not be made to pay'

THERE is need to find urgent solutions to the degradation of the environment and the poor must not be made to pay for the past and present sins of the rich. There is need for concerted international effort and the Commonwealth can help bring some sanity and balance to the current debate on environment.

"We must all share the burden of keeping our environment liveable. but. the sharing must be fair and in accord with the means at the disposal of each one of us," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Speaking at the opening of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, he said: "Unfortunately many developed countries seem intent on laying the blame for the world's environmental problems on the developing countries.

"Yet by any measure, it is the



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developed countries which have most assailed our environment, Nuclear testing, excessive use of fossil fuels, private transportation, release of CFC into the atmosphere, massive wastage of paper, toxic chemical disposal; all these and more are the direct result of the life style of the rich," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said poverty also contributed towards environmental decline but only because the poor cannot help themselves. "If they are denied

the few resources they have, they are going to become poorer and would cause even greater environmental degradation.

"On the converse, the rich can afford not only to reduce their waste generating life style but can also expend more on reafforestation of the agricultural land they had wrested from the forests," he said.

Unfortunately the line taken by the environmentalists is to lay the blame on poor countries and seek to force them to slow down their development in the interest of restoring the environment which the rich had polluted.

On the problem of **dadah**, the Prime Minister said only a combined and coordinated anti-dadah trafficking war by the international community can hope to defeat this evil and prop up governments against the violent **assults** by the "merchants of death".

He added that an all out global

war must be waged with **all** the money and forces available. He noted that the "cost will be high but the price we will have to pay if the **dadah** menace spreads will be far higher".

Stressing the **need** for universal severe punishment for **dadah** traffickers, he added that it is the laxity of some nations which has caused the **dadah** habit to spread.

"Remember that along with the **dadah** habit will come AIDS. Those who advocate leniency are guilty of spreading AIDS as well. We must act now," he added.

On South Africa, he said **anti**-apartheid efforts must be stepped up and correct signals sent to the racist regime. While noting that sanctions work, he added that not only should the sanctions continue but they "must also be escalated".

"Investments and financial flows to racist South Africa must be completely stopped," he said to a round of applause.