

Malaysia cares for the environment, Jested inter anti-timber

BY NURAINA SAMAD

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed regret over “yet another campaign” against one of Malaysia’s commodity exports — tropical hardwoods.

The Prime Minister said after having survived a bruising campaign against tropical oils, which had singled out Malaysian palm oil, the country was now faced with the anti-tropical hardwoods campaign.

The Government, he added, took a serious view of this campaign and saw “vested interests out to protect their own temperate climate soft timber industry.”

“Allegation regarding the destruction of the tropical rainforests with their insect and animal popula-

gone to preserve the environment.

“If and when we approve timber concessions, strict conditions are imposed on the logging companies.

“In fact, the natural beauty of our country is one of the most valuable assets which we are selling abroad in our effort to promote Malaysia’s tourist industry,” he said.

On the plight of the Penans, an issue of the campaign, Dr Mahathir said it was most cruel to use them “to put a human face to a campaign” against Malaysia’s timber industry “merely to excite sympathy and support”.

He said there was nothing romantic in the primitive way of life of the few Penans who still remained in the forests.

They were ignorant, undernourished, prone to all kinds of diseases and have a shorter life-span than the average Malaysian.

“To force them to continue living this primitive way of life is to deny them the benefits of modern medicine and education.

PM tells US businessmen ests behind campaign

tion and the exploitation of the abode of the Penans sound rather hollow in the face of massive logging in the countries where these **conservationists** come from and their failure to limit their own extensive pollution of the environment," he said.

Opening the inaugural meeting of the Malaysia-US Private Sector Consultative Group, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not without concern for environmental issues but reiterated that maintenance of the ecological balance is a responsibility of everyone and not the developing countries alone.

Malaysia, he said was proud of her natural rainforests and had taken great pains to manage them. Large amounts of money and effort had

"What right have we who have emerged from our own caves centuries ago to deny them the benefit of the discoveries and the improvements we have achieved."

Dr Mahathir gave an assurance to the American corporate leaders present at the opening that Malaysia was as sensitive as the **industrialised** countries about the environment.

He said the fact that Malaysia was responsible for the drafting of the Langkawi Declaration on the Environment and that the country acceded to the 1985 Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer and the 1987 Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer bore testimony to this.