

# -Dr M: \$bn sacrifice to scrap Bakun project

BY 13 JUN 1990

By AHIRUDIN ATTAN

MALAYSIA sacrificed billions of ringgit in revenues and savings when it scrapped the Bakun hydroelectric project for the sake of the environment, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The decision has also denied the people employment potential and cost them cheaper power for their homes while industries missed the opportunity of a competitive edge through the abundant supply of electricity, he told the international conference on biodiversity in Subang yesterday.

"For a developing country, it's a high price to pay to protect the environment. But we did it because we're doing our part for the world environment. If others don't do their part, we hope that at least they will not make things any more difficult for us," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added that since what Malaysia is doing contributes to a better environment for the rest of the world, some thought should be given to its sacrifice.

He said a way must be found to maintain global biodiversity without bringing development in poor countries to a standstill. Since developed countries, with their advanced technological and scientific capability, are in a better position to reap the benefits from the conservation of biodiversity, they must be willing to support efforts by developing countries without imposing "restrictive burdens" on them.

The Prime Minister said losses from having to abandon the Bakun project alone run into "thousands of millions (of ringgit)". The decision to scrap the controversial project was made by the Cabinet on March 23 in view of the environmental impact the project would have on its surrounding areas. The Rajang River in Sarawak has been identified to take over the hydroelectric project.

"Yes, we have been able to identify alternative projects. But the cost of producing electricity will be much higher," he said, adding that although development projects will not be affected by the scrapping of Bakun, the cost of the

Cont'd Back Page, Col. 2

## \$bn sacrifice

FROM PAGE ONE 13 JUN 1990

development will necessarily be higher.

The \$10 billion Bakun project, the Prime Minister added, was to have supplied 3,000 megawatt of electricity. This would have doubled the nation's total electricity supply. The cost of producing a unit of electricity at Bakun was estimated to be around one sen, 17-24 times cheaper than present production costs.

In his address to the 100 scientists, experts and observers attending the conference, the Prime Minister said Malaysia has demonstrated its commitment to conservation in many other ways apart from Bakun.

The Langkawi Declaration on the Environment, the signing of international agreements on the protection of biological diversity, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, the creation of the region's first national park, and the formulation of related Acts, such as the Environmental Quality Act that provides for mandatory environmental impact statements, are reflective of this commitment.