

# Boycott of tropical timber 'not the solution'

NEW YORK, Wed. — Developed nations should actively reduce their contribution to environmental degradation instead of accusing developing nations of compounding the problem, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said yesterday.

In his address to the 46th United Nations General Assembly here, he said the idea that tropical forests can be saved only by boycotting tropical timber smacked more of economic arm-twisting than a real desire to save forests.

Developed nations had not explored their potential for reforestation, for example, in the case of the United States which had deserts that could be transformed into tropical forests.

"The deserts of California can be converted into tropical forests complete with rain forest flora and fauna simply by pumping the ground water and planting trees.

"Instead the underground water is being used for golf courses and artificial lakes to surround luxury hotels. If one can build sophisticated warplanes at one billion dollars each, surely one should have the ingenuity and the money to create tropical forests out of deserts?"

Citing Libya as an example of a nation which had successfully contributed to environmental conservation and enhancement, he said it had tapped underground water to irrigate its deserts.

"It is shameful that nations richer and more advanced than Libya have done nothing significant to green the world."

On the development of hydro-electric power, he said although poor nations had to sacrifice some of their forests for urgently-needed power, this was not fatal for them as they had vast forest reserves.

But all sorts of campaigns are mounted by the richer countries against hydro-electricity, which have already developed their hydro-electric potential.

"Now of course the World Bank will be used to deprive poor countries of cheap hydro-electric power. Can we be blamed if we think that this is a ploy to keep us poor?"