

UNCED chief: We need Dr M's presence

By Robert Goh

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad ~~should attend the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Brazil next June as his strong position on the environment is extremely important for the developing world, UNCED secretary-general Dr Maurice Strong said today.~~

He believed developing countries were looking to Malaysia for a continuation of its strong leadership in these issues.

"I hope that he (Dr Mahathir) will find it in his interest to go to Rio de Janeiro (to represent Malaysia) because the strong position on the environment that he has been advocating is extremely important for Malaysia and the developing world," he said when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's recent statement that Malaysia might skip the conference if it was to be a forum to criticise developing countries on their environmental policies.

Speaking after a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba at his office, Dr Strong added that Dr Mahathir had every right to be concerned as was Brazil.

"But the conference would have been preceded by two years of intense negotiations. However, there will still be differences, otherwise there would be no need for a conference to try to reach a consensus on these issues.

"But the conference is not an occasion for countries to throw bricks at each other.

"In any case, they should realise that Malaysia has a far better environmental record than most countries.

"No country has solved all its environmental problems, even my native Canada. So we need a supportive regime and Malaysia needs and deserves support.

"Developing countries

PLEASE TURN TO
PAGE 2, COL 1

Malaysia seeks equal partnership

FROM PAGE ONE

have strong demands which I support, and we in the secretariat are preparing materials strongly supportive of them. However, it is for their leaders to put forward their stand at UNCED."

On his meeting with Encik Ghafar, Dr Strong said the Deputy Prime Minister had made a "very important" statement yesterday in which he had reminded developed countries of their primary responsibility for the global risks faced by the world such as global warming and ozone depletion.

He added that developing countries have created the model for development for others to follow, and now needed to clean up their own act as they produced most of the chlorofluorocarbons depleting the ozone layer.

Asked by reporters after the meeting whether Malaysia would attend the UNCED, Encik Ghafar said the matter was still under consideration.

At a Press conference later, he said the evidence developed by the UNCED preparatory committee was strongly supportive of the position taken by Malaysia with regards to the relationship between the industrialised countries and the developing countries.

He said the conference

would be calling for the setting up of an equitable global partnership to replace the traditional North-South relationship which tended to be a "top to bottom" relationship where the powerful dictated terms.

Dr Strong also supported Malaysia's proposal to host a conference of developing countries on environment and development in Kuala Lumpur next April.

He said it would be effective in helping to consolidate the position of developing countries to be forwarded to UNCED.

Stressing that he was not here to seek Malaysia's commitment to attend the conference, Dr Strong said the official invitations had been issued and the secretariat did not expect any official answers until a few weeks later.

He said although there were radical Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that blamed the developing countries for many of the environmental issues, these groups did not represent Governments or mainstream public opinion.

"On the whole, the 400 accredited NGOs taking part in our preparatory committee meetings are not only supportive of the developing countries position but are also more critical of industrialised countries," he said.