

Malaysia may attend Rio summit, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. Malaysia will consider the possibility of attending the Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro in June after the second ministerial conference of developing countries on the environment and development here is over.

"If necessary, we will go if we reach consensus and unanimity, we may attend the summit. But this will only be discussed after this meeting in Kuala Lumpur," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said this when asked to comment on the call by several delegates during the senior officials' meeting (SOM) for Malaysia to be the spokesman for the South in Rio de Janeiro.

The Prime Minister had earlier opened the three-day conference at the Crown Princess hotel and launched

a documentary, *An initiative for the greening of the world*.

Dr Mahathir said any consensus reached by the delegates here would mean achievement of unanimity and agreement among developing countries.

"But whether unanimity among countries of the South is accepted by the developed world is another matter.

"That is why I believe that before we go to the Rio summit, there must be total commitment from the developed countries. Then only can we say that the Rio summit would be successful."

On non-governmental organisations, some of which were said to be resorting to terrorism in the name of the environment, Dr Mahathir said these NGOs were not interested or concerned about the environment.

"They are actually trying to promote their own products to compete with tropical timber from developing countries.

"So in an effort to ensure that tropical timber does not compete with their own products, they resort to actions that destroy our tropical products."

However, Dr Mahathir said, when it came to putting out forest fires in developing countries, these groups did not care.

He said this was because when there was a major forest fire, "our tropical wood cannot be exported to the West to compete with their goods".

"But on the other hand, when we resort to logging of our tropical rainforests, they are unhappy because we are competing with their products ... and bring up the issue of the environment as

an excuse."

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on a statement by US ambassador Robert Ryan, who is also the director of the US UNCED co-ordination centre, that the US would not budge from its stand that the global environmental facility (GEF) be maintained.

"If they do not want to change their lifestyles, then they should not expect developing countries to sacrifice for them so that they can lead comfortable lives.

"This is unfair. Why should the poor sacrifice for the rich? This is what we fail to understand."

Dr Mahathir said the West often resorted to demonstrations and used the media to criticise developing countries in the name of the environment.

"But on the other hand they wish to continue main-

taining their present lifestyles by polluting the environment without willing to even pay for the damage done," he added.

On the reaction of the developing countries to Malaysia's launching of *An initiative for the greening of the world*, Dr Mahathir said developing countries had no objections and supported the initiative.

"But the greening of the world requires financial commitment and those who pollute the environment most must spend more money than the rest."

The Prime Minister added that if Malaysia attended the summit, the proposal and initiative would be submitted in Rio.