

PIM assures world of a 'green' M'sia

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THE Prime Minister has assured the world that at least 50 per cent of the land area in Malaysia will remain permanently under forest cover.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia had taken a number of measures towards ensuring a cleaner and healthier environment.

These included the creation of awareness among the people on the need to preserve the environment.

The announcement is another commitment by Malaysia towards the preservation of the tropical forests as 60 per cent of the country is already forest-covered with another 12 per cent covered by plantation green.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was acutely conscious that it was a developing country which needed the wealth afforded by its forests.

"We do not cut down our trees foolishly. We need living space, we need space for agriculture, and we need the

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money from the sale of our timber," he said.

"If it is in the interest of the rich that we do not cut down our trees, they must compensate us for the loss of income."

Dr Mahathir also wanted the North to relocate timber processing industries here to enable the country to earn more value added revenue.

He said this would result in the country cutting down even fewer trees.

"The boycott of Malaysian timber will help nothing. Indeed, if our timber is of no value to us, we might as well cut down

the trees for fuel and release land for agriculture," he said.

He said when the anti-tropical timber campaign did not attract sufficient attention, a human face was added to it by using the Penans.

The activists, he said, urged the gentle Penans to be militant and to defy the authorities.

"Stop making an issue of the Penans. Promote temperate timber if you must but accept competition by tropical timber," he said.

He urged the West to stop linking trade and aid

with environment and "to stop arm twisting."

He also urged the West to clean up its own backyard as he said 80 per cent of pollution was due to activities in the industrially-developed North.

Their non-governmental organisations should stay at home and apply pressure on their own governments, their industrialists and their military leaders.

Dr Mahathir also called for a stop to the use of nuclear fuel for power and above all, the storage and use of nuclear weapons.

"If the environment is going to be cleaned, those most responsible for polluting it must act," he said.

Calling the North to commit itself to the environment, Dr Mahathir asked if the West could draw up ground water to build exclusive golf courses in the deserts, why was not the same technique used to water the desert and reforest it?