

KL won't sign any pact that is not useful: PM

By AHIRUDIN ATTAN

DESPITE being labelled "trouble-maker" at Rio de Janeiro, Malaysia will not sign any convention at the Earth Summit that does not take into account its interests, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He told newsmen in Kuala Lumpur yesterday that while some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in industrialised countries may view this as a hard-line stand, "the Government will only sign conventions that are practical and beneficial to Malaysia".

The label "trouble-maker" given to Malaysia by some NGOs at the Earth Summit in the Brazilian city did not take him aback.

"We cannot please everyone. We do not deny that some NGOs may not like us, but some of them do like us," he said after witnessing the signing of a technology transfer agreement between Malaysian and Japanese firms.

Malaysia was given the label by NGOs from developed countries after its refusal to sign any convention and its dismissal of a proposed post-Summit forest conference as being "untimely".

Dr Mahathir left for Rio last night to attend the Earth Summit proper, which opens tomorrow. He is scheduled to deliver a six-minute address at the Summit, formally known as the UN Conference

on Environment and Development (Unced), on behalf of developing countries.

He said the Government will study the various conventions produced by the Earth Summit and is confident of Malaysia ratifying the ones that are useful and meaningful to the country.



But he maintained Malaysia's reservations about the Biodiversity and Climate Change Convention, a principal treaty that the conference hopes every country would sign during the conference.

"We will study the convention carefully, but in the absence of a specific programme and commitment from developed countries, it will be meaningless for us to ratify the convention," he said, adding that the convention did not have specific programmes, for example, on how to approach the climate change issue.

The US, like Malaysia, is also opposed to signing the convention. But while Malaysia is unhappy with the convention because it fails to

spell out specific programmes, the US fears that developed nations will have to pay too much under the convention to carry out the programmes.

Dr Mahathir said if nations which have the means to fund the programmes are reluctant to do so, it will be harder to expect poor nations to agree to pay for environmental protection.

Leaders from 178 rich and poor member nations of the UN are attending the conference. Their officials have been meeting for the past week to prepare the various treaties for the heads of government to sign during the Summit proper.

Dr Mahathir reiterated his optimism that "something good" will come out of the Rio Summit.

In another development, the Prime Minister said the Government will make good its promise to pay bonuses to government employees if the economic situation and the Government's financial standing permit.

The Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs) has requested for a \$1,000 bonus for each of the 880,000-odd civil servants under the New Remuneration System introduced by the Government this year.

Cuepacs secretary-general A.H. Ponniah had said that the Government's condition that bonus will be paid only if the economic situa-

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tion permits was "too subjective".

Dr Mahathir said there is nothing subjective in that. "There are statistics to show whether the economy is doing well or otherwise. The Government will pay the bonus as promised if it can afford to do so".

Bernama reports from Rio De Janeiro: Some 200 lawmakers and 100 spiritual

leaders the world over will be setting up an international "Green Cross", similar to the Red Cross, to mobilise people to protect and preserve their natural environment.

The decision to set up the Green Cross, with former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev as its first president, was contained in the "Rio Consensus".