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POLLUTION CAUSED BY OVER-CONSUMPTION OF RICH NATIONS, SAYS MAHATHIR

Mahathir - pollution

from Kuala Lumpur

(P) Dr. M. overseas trips.

RIO DE JANEIRO, June 12 (Bernama) -- Pollution and environmental degradation are caused by over-consumption by the rich or North nations, not by over-population of the Third World, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here Thursday.

The Prime Minister said that only about 25 per cent of the world's population were rich and yet they generated about 85 per cent of the waste, while the 75 per cent of people who were in the developing world generated only some 10 per cent or so of the waste.

+If you have over-population in the developed countries, it will be a disaster ... because over-consumption with a large population will result in massive pollution,+ said Dr Mahathir, who took his first shot at the Earth Summit where there is a contention that unless the South contains its huge population growth, the earth will be doomed.

+The numbers are irrelevant,+ he said, adding that the fact remains that it was over-consumption of the rich that generated the bulk of the waste and pollution.

+Even if you could get rid of the other 75 per cent of the people of the developing world, you would only reduce about 10 to 15 per cent of the waste and pollution. But if the North countries could reduce their waste by 25 per cent, it would be a substantial reduction of pollution,+ he said.

The Prime Minister, who arrived on Thursday to join about 120 kings, presidents and prime ministers for the largest meeting ever in history, noted that when a country got rich, its population and rate of population growth went down.

+If the rich nations prevent the poor countries from getting rich, then they can only blame themselves if the poor get more numerous,+ he added. -- more

▼12/06/12-05MST

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Mahathir - pollution 2 Rio De Janeiro

Dr Mahathir also said that whether the 12-day summit, which ends on Sunday, would be a success or not would depend on what would happen after the conference, whether decisions and programmes were going to be implemented.

But to a certain extent, the summit has been a success in that it got some 120 heads of government and heads of state together to talk about the environment and sustainable development.

He noted that 20 years ago when the first world conference on environment was held in Stockholm, many countries were not invited.

On the United States' pressure for a convention to govern forests, particularly tropical forests, the Prime Minister said he did not think there was a need for an international treaty on forests at this time.

What was needed now, he said, was to establish the principles through which +we can manage our forests quite independently.+

+However, should there come a time when the people (of the world) need a convention to govern the forests, then we must also have a convention to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases,+ he said. -- more

▼12/06/12-18MST

CNS2659

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Mahathir - pollution 3 Rio de Janeiro

He said Malaysia would not sign the Convention on Climate because there was no limit or +caps+ under which the industrialised countries had to reduce the emission of the greenhouse gases to the 1990 level by the year 2000. The treaty was so vague and watered down, he said, adding that Malaysia would sign if the +caps+ are included.

But Malaysia would sign the Convention on Bio-diversity Friday because it protected at least some of Malaysia's interests, he said.

The Prime Minister said he was disappointed with the US' stand on the bio-diversity treaty. The US has refused to endorse the treaty because it, among other things, fails to protect the intellectual property rights of its companies and that it would cost the US a lot of jobs.

Dr Mahathir said it would be inconsiderate of the developed countries, with their sophisticated bio-technology, to make use of the gene banks found in the developing countries and declare the products their intellectual property rights without due benefits to the developing countries.

On the question finance, Dr Mahathir noted that the developed nations had yet to meet their pledge (to provide the equivalent of 0.7 per cent of their Gross National Product to assist the poor countries under the Official Development Assistance (ODA)).

He said there were only a few rich nations that had met the ODA target to assist the poor countries. -- more

▼12/06/12-24MST

CNS2665

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Mahathir - pollution 4 (last) Rio de Janeiro

The question of new and more financial resources to help developing countries to implement Agenda 21, the programme of action after the Rio summit, is a sticky point in the ongoing negotiations between the North and South at the summit.

Delegates, who met through the night to 6 am Thursday, resumed their informal meeting this afternoon to resolve the issue. They were joined by their ministers, who met in select groups because there is no formal meeting scheduled for the ministers to resolve these differences.

Officials and ministers who emerged from their meeting for dinner said they were prepared for another marathon session Thursday night. Among the matters in contention is the South's demand that the rich nations meet their ODA target by the year 2000 and, conference sources say, they were working on a compromise whereby the North meets the ODA by the year 2000 or soon after.

The other sticky point that got the delegates and ministers to meet again and again is the North's demand for a provision for a convention on forests which was rejected by the South countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, India and Brazil.

Dr Mahathir held a pre-council meeting with his delegation soon after arrival, and also met German Federal Chancellor Dr Helmut Kohl.

The Prime Minister said he discussed with Dr Kohl the general political situation of the world and the issues of the summit. -- Bernama

▼12/06/12-38MST