

# Population is not the cause, says Mahathir

RIO DE JANEIRO: Population is not one of the causes of environmental degradation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said on Saturday.

He disputed the assumption, saying the world's rich nations which formed 25 per cent of the global population consumed 85 per cent of its wealth and produced 90 per cent of its waste.

**"Mathematically speak-**

*Mahathir - overseas trips.*  
ing, worldwide pollution will be reduced by 22.5 per cent if the rich reduce their wasteful consumption by 25 per cent," he said.

He added, however, that if the **poor 7.5 per cent** reduce **consumption** totally and disappear from earth altogether the reduction in pollution would only be by 10 per cent.

"It is **what** the rich do

*that counts, not what the poor do, however much they do it,*" he said, adding all must be prepared to make the necessary adjustments if sustainable development is to be achieved.

"But if we begin by saying our lifestyle is sacred and not for negotiation then it would be meaningless to talk about development and the environment," he said.

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Dr Mahathir also said a major industrialised country's refusal to cut back emissions of carbon dioxide at the rate accepted by others had rendered **the** climate change convention inequitable and meaningless.

Malaysia **will** only sign the climate change convention if it becomes "meaningful" through the inclusion of timetables to reduce emissions of

**greenhouse gases.**

"No one is cutting back (emissions) ... **they** are just saying that they will cut back," Dr Mahathir had told a press conference earlier.

He said Malaysia had been cutting back on carbon dioxide emissions for several years through imposing a **300** per cent tax on cars with large capacity engines and also heavily taxing small cars.

He said, however, the tax on automobiles and petrol was low in most countries thus accounting for high car to population ratio.

"Surely a reduction in the number of private cars and better public transport would not change the lifestyle **too** much yet would do **wonders** for global warming," he said.