

# Dr M: Have convention after North replants

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By TAN CHENG LI

RIO DE JANEIRO: The day when the North replants its forest will be the day when there should be a forest convention, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said on Saturday.

He said having a convention now would mean it would only be used to regulate logging practices in forest-covered South countries as most developed countries do not have forests.

What was happening now was the North fo-

Mahathir - overseas lips

cused only on forests in the South and attempted to regulate how the South managed its forests while the South had no say about how industrialised countries polluted the environment, he said.

"The day when the North replant their forests ... that is the time when we should have a convention.

"The convention will cover all the forests in both North and South and will be treated equally," he told a press conference.

If there was a forest

convention, the South could also press for a convention governing industries so they could instruct the North on the type of processes which could be allowed.

"That I think will be fair," he said.

He said logging should be limited but not to the extent the developing countries had to pay high prices merely for the forests to act as carbon sinks for pollution emitted by developed countries.

"The poor countries are entitled to royalties if they are told not to de-

stroy their forest (just because one day we may find something good for humanity," he said.

On the impact of the United States' refusal to sign the biodiversity convention, Dr Mahathir said developing countries would lose out.

This was because the United States would not be legally-bound to pay for any genetic resources collected from the South.

Deluged with questions on the Penans, Dr Mahathir explained the indigenous people were given a choice to either re-

tain their nomadic lifestyle in the jungles or live in the civilised world.

Should they decide not to stay in the towns, there would always be a place for them to return to as it was Malaysia's policy to keep at least 50 per cent of the forest cover, he said.

"We cannot deprive them the opportunity of experiencing life in an orderly society. Once given the choice, practically all will choose to stay in civilised areas," he said, adding that of the 10,000 Penans in Sarawak, only 10

per cent were still living in the jungle.

Dr Mahathir also explained to the foreign media Malaysia practised controlled felling of trees where only seven matured trees were removed from each hectare.

There were only clear felling for housing, settlement and money. "We are not exploiting forest for no reason. We need the money."

More clear felling was carried out by those living in the jungles particularly those practising shifting cultivation.