

# PM: POOR PAYING THE RICH

Dr Mahathir ... ever seen things

BY TAN CHENG LI

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**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Developing countries have been paying for the development of the rich and are now asked to clean up their mess, the Earth Summit was told.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the South had been asked to preserve its forest and to cut down its population, yet the North claimed sovereign right when asked to change its consumptive lifestyle.

"The poor said nothing when the rich chopped down their forests, built their poison-belching factories and scoured the world for cheap resources. "Indeed they paid for the development of the rich. Now the rich claim a right to regulate the development of the poor countries. Yet any suggestion that the rich compensate the poor adequately is regarded as outrageous," he said at the plenary session on Saturday (full text in Page 19).

Dr Mahathir said the developing countries would be impoverished and their development retarded if they were denied their own resources.

The poor countries have been told to preserve their forests and other genetic resources on the off-chance at some future date something was discovered which might prove useful to humanity.

"This is the same as telling these poor countries they must continue to be poor because their forests and other resources are more precious than themselves," he said.

He said the rich countries had also refused to compensate developing countries for gene resources, claiming they were intellectual property.

"Surely if something is discovered in their forests, they should be entitled to some returns," said Dr Mahathir.

He said the rich refused to cut back their emissions of greenhouse gases because it would be a cost to them and would retard their progress.

"Yet they expect the poor people of developing countries to stifle even their minute growth as if it will cost them nothing," he said.

Dr Mahathir said most developed countries had already destroyed their capacity to deal with waste as their trees had been felled but their waste-generation was growing.

They must now rely on the poor countries to dispose of this waste, he said.

He said Malaysia was able to cope with waste generated within the country but must now deal with cross-border pollution.

Although the country was about the size of Britain, its population was only a third as big and its per capita income one-tenth of the developed countries.

Thus, he said Malaysia's capacity for wasteful consumption was limited and formed only one thirtieth that of the developed countries.

"Its capacity to deal with its own waste is far in excess of its needs as the country is almost 60 per cent covered by self-generating tropical rainforest and an additional 15 per cent by tree plantations.

"Any carbon dioxide we produce we can absorb," said Dr Mahathir.