

PM to seek Cabinet approval to join GEF

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From AZAM ARIS

RIO DE JANEIRO, Mon: Malaysia will join the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank controlled financial institution, agreed to by developing and developed countries as one of the main mechanisms to finance post-Rio programmes.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he will seek the Cabinet's approval for the move adding that Malaysia can contribute to a more transparent and effective GEF.

"At the Summit, a lot of countries (some from the North) agreed on a more transparent GEF and that the South will have greater say in the management of this facility.

"That is why I think we should become a member. Membership of the GEF should be universal and open to all countries. There should be no exclusivity," he told Malaysian journalists at the end of the Unced Summit on Sunday.

The GEF has a membership fee of US\$4 million, of this amount the participating country has to put up US\$2 million and the World Bank the remainder. Dr Mahathir said the poor who cannot afford this amount

should also be allowed in as members.

Set up in 1990, the GEF is jointly managed by United Nations Development Programmes, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Bank.

At the Summit, the sensitive subject of financial re-

target for Official Development Assistance (ODA) — 0.7 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) by 2000 — has been changed to suit the North.

Instead of specific targets, the agreed final text reaffirms the North's commitments to the UN target of 0.7 per cent by 2000 or as soon as possible. The commission on sustainable development, expected to be in force in 1993, will regularly monitor the progress of the North in meeting the target.

Dr Mahathir said although Unced has managed to create greater awareness on the links between environment and development among world leaders it has not succeeded in getting the North's commitment on financial matters.

"They claimed the South misuses the money they give but they can still monitor this. They are blaming the South for their own unwillingness to meet the amount they agreed to (of 0.7 per cent of GNP) in the 1960s.

"For Malaysia it will not be that difficult as we don't get much aid and has the ability to borrow but I feel unhappy for the many poor countries of the South," he said.

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sources and mechanisms, was finally resolved early yesterday morning. On the GEF, the South managed to get the North to agree on a governance that is transparent and democratic — a stand reflective of the G-77 and China's position and that of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration.

The controversial wordings in the draft of the financial resources and mechanisms text, which touched on

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The North at the meeting did not make a "reasonably large and specific" financial commitment as it does not consider Rio as a "pledging" conference. The North countries are also of the view that recipients from the South should not decide on the quantum of financial assis-

tance needed to finance post-Rio programmes.

Commenting on this Dr Mahathir said: "The recipient countries are not asking the North for its carbon dioxide emissions... If they allow us to have a say in controlling their polluting industries then they have the right to control the financ-

ing," he said.

Dr Mahathir added that it is difficult to change the attitude of the North but Malaysia and the South will keep on pushing for a change. However, the South will continue to be dependent on the North financially and technologically due to its limited capacity.