

Dr M: We will subscribe to general environment facility

From K. Bala

RIO DE JANEIRO, Mon. — Malaysia will subscribe to the general environment facility (GEF) of the World Bank which will deal with the funding for Agenda 21 — the blueprint for environmental programmes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development which ended yesterday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia would become a member of the GEF although he had not discussed it with the Cabinet.

The decision to join the GEF, over which the industrialised countries have decisive voting power in the bank's board, is prompted by the decision at the 12-day

UNCED to allow South countries to have more say.

"Since a number of North countries have agreed there should be transparency in the management of the bank, we will contribute our share," he told Malaysian newsmen before leaving for home last night.

Countries have to pay US\$4 million (about \$10 million) each over eight years to become members.

However, Dr Mahathir said all countries should be in the GEF and payment should not be the main criteria.

"To some poor countries, US\$4 million is a lot of money," he said.

"The GEF should not be made exclusive based on payment.

"It should be based on the

concept of pay if you can pay. And if you can pay more, then do so."

On the claim by the North that money given to a few South countries had been abused, Dr Mahathir said then they could oversee the funds.

"They are blaming the South for their unwillingness to pay the amount they had agreed to pay 20 years ago," he said.

The North had agreed to provide 0.7 per cent of their GNP as overseas development assistance 20 years ago.

For Malaysia, this is not relevant as she is not receiving the aid.

"But for the sake of many countries in the South, we are unhappy that the North is not providing the funds,"

he said.

Asked about the statement by the North that recipients should not set targets for funds, Dr Mahathir replied:

"We are receiving their carbon dioxide emissions and we have no control over that.

"If they give us the right to control their polluting industries, then of course they have a right to control their funds."

The Prime Minister, responding to another question, said it was disappointing that the North had not changed its stand.

Dr Mahathir said the ability of the South to produce technology to deal with environment was limited de-

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spite their cohesiveness in G7 and G15.

He regretted that the North was trying to profit from the environment saying it was thinking of how much it could make from technology.

The North was producing new devices to sell at high cost. Even if the South could produce their inventions, it had to pay royalty, he added.

He cited catalytic converters to reduce CO2 emission in vehicles as one of the costly products of the North.

"Despite the cost, we are going ahead to require Malaysian vehicles to be fitted with the converters," he said adding that this was proof of how much Malaysia cared for its environment.

Malaysia, he said, would implement the programme of action under Agenda 21 to the best of its ability.

It had implemented measures long before, including controlled logging and the EIA reports.