

'ISLAMIC STATES MUST PLAY A PART'

# Unite, Dr M tells South countries

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By AHIRUDIN ATTAN

IF THE South is to be effective in ensuring that the protection of the environment will not result in retarding development, then it must achieve solidarity and argue from a common standpoint, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Islamic countries, the Prime Minister said, must play their part in achieving this.

Opening the Sixth Islamic Academy of Sciences Conference on Environment and Development in the Islamic World, Dr Mahathir said the recent Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro has shown that there are significant differences between the developed and developing countries in terms of priorities.

"The rich North, obviously reluctant to curb its profligate lifestyle, is merely concerned with extending its control over natural resources, particularly resources such as tropical forests, which are only to be found in the South.

"The South, mired and entrapped in poverty, urgently requires economic growth and development, which are only achievable if a supportive international economic

system is in place," he said.

Therefore, while North-South cooperation is central to global environmental protection and sustained economic growth, developing countries must at the same time forge greater cooperation among themselves.

"The South must not ignore the many opportunities available to also enhance South-South cooperation. We have much to gain by learning and working together on these important matters," he added.

In this context, Dr Mahathir urged scientists in the South to supply research findings and technical data to strengthen the South's position when negotiating the various environment-related conventions and protocols.

"Sound and verifiable data are crucial if the South is to safeguard its interests in multilateral negotiations," he added.

Dr Mahathir said scientists in the Islamic world have much to contribute towards South-South cooperation in the field of environment and development.

"Through intensified interaction among themselves, they can project a model of the kind of coopera-



MAHATHIR... much to gain by working together

tion that can be emulated by all the countries in the South," he added.

Dr Mahathir noted, however, that although the basic infrastructure of science and technology is available in many Islamic countries, it is neither large nor strong enough to cope with the rapid development in this field that is taking place worldwide.

"The importance of a strong and sound base of science and technology cannot be over-emphasised. The base underpins our efforts to solve the problems of food, defence, security, shelter, fuel and energy, health and pollution, exploitation of mineral resources and the enhancement of agricultural and industrial production."

He said scholars, scientists and researchers in the Muslim world must not lag behind if they wish to help the Islamic community expand and consolidate its scientific and technological base, especially in research and development.

Islamic countries must, therefore, improve their educational and research facilities so as to ensure the capacity of the Ummah to keep with scientific and technological advancements and to improve on them.

In order to accelerate this process and make the quantum leap that is necessary to improve the life of the Ummah, Muslim scientists must accumulate as much knowledge as possible so as to enable them to develop environmentally sound and appropriate technology, he added.