

PM: South solidarity

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By Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The South must achieve solidarity and argue from a common standpoint if it is to be effective in ensuring that the protection of the environment will not cause development to be retarded, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Islamic countries must play their part in achieving this, he added.

The Prime Minister said the need for a continuing dialogue between the rich and poor, between North and South, was obvious.

"While North-South interaction and co-operation is central to the prevention of global environmental degradation and the need for sustained economic growth, the South must not ignore the many opportunities available to also enhance South-South co-operation.

"The scientists of the Islamic world have much to contribute towards South-South co-operation in the field of environment and development," Dr Mahathir said when opening the sixth Islamic Academy of Sciences conference entitled "Environment and development in the Islamic world", at the Islamic Centre here.

Dr Mahathir said the conference in itself was a tangible manifestation of South-South co-operation. "We have much to gain by learning and working together on these important matters."

He said through intensified interaction among themselves, they could project a model of the kind of co-operation that could be emulated by all the countries of the South.

"There should be closer collaboration among the scientists in such areas as climate change and biological

diversity.

"Your research findings and technical data will also serve to strengthen the bases of our negotiators as they negotiate the various environment-related conventions and protocols," he said.

Dr Mahathir said sound and verifiable data were crucial if the South was to safeguard its interests in multilateral negotiations.

"Science and technology have a critical role to play in the global endeavour to protect the environment and to promote sustainable development.

"In this regard, scholars, scientists and researchers in the Muslim world must not lag behind if they wish to help the *ummah* expand and consolidate their scientific and technological base, particularly in the vital area of research and development", he said.

Dr Mahathir said Islamic countries, in many instances very richly endowed, must improve their educational and scientific research facilities so as to ensure the capability of the *ummah* to keep up with scientific and technological advancements and to improve on them.

Dr Mahathir also said that in order to accelerate this process and to make the quantum leap that was necessary to improve the quality of life of the *ummah*, it was important that Muslim scientists accumulate as much knowledge as possible so as to enable them to develop environmentally-sound and appropriate technology.

"What is suitable for developed countries may not be suitable for developing countries. It is up to the scientists in the developing countries to devise and modify the technologies of

the developed countries to suit the needs of the developing countries."

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

He said the importance of a strong and sound base of science and technology could not be over-emphasised.

"The base underpins our efforts to solve the problems of food, defence, security, shelter, fuel and energy, health and the enhancement of agricultural and industrial production."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had recognised the need to develop its technological capabilities in its quest to achieve the status of a fully developed nation by the year 2020.

Indeed, he added, the acquisition of such capabilities represented one of the key strategies under the Second Outline Perspective Plan and the Sixth Malaysia Plan.

He said to be a developed nation did not mean merely achieving the same GNP per capita of the rich countries.

"This is important of course because national poverty tends to undermine independence. But equally important is the acquisition of knowledge that can contribute towards national security and scientific and technological independence."

He said without this, they would always be supplicants, dependent on the charity of others. He also said that true independence should not lead to the kind of arrogance that resulted in rash actions and acquisi-

tiveness.

"As much as we value independence, we must respect the independence of others and thus being developed must include the practice of good moral values within society and between societies and nations," he said.

Dr Mahathir urged Muslim scientists to adhere to good moral values.

"Their knowledge should be for the good of the *ummah* in general.

"The *ummah* with the help of Muslim scientists must project to the world the true meaning of human civilisation and progress, for it is enjoined upon Muslims to acquire knowledge not for evil but for the good of mankind."

He said fellows of the Islamic Academy of Sciences had a significant role to play in promoting the development of science and technology in the Islamic world, and that they had a catalytic role in promoting growth and progress of the Islamic world in particular and the rest of the world in general.

He said the academy as a non-governmental organisation had a valuable contribution to make, particularly through the morally sound application of science and technology.

The five-day conference organised by the Jordan-based Islamic Academy of Sciences is participated by scholars from the Islamic countries.

Among those present at the opening ceremony were Minister of Science, Technology and Environment Law Hieng Ding, President of the Islamic Academy of Sciences Prof Mumtaz A. Kazi, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud and Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat.

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