

# Dr M: Develop technologies that cut down pollution

By LOKMAN MANSOR

DEVELOPED countries must consume less of the world's resources and develop technologies that cut down pollution to help achieve a sustainable world economy, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

He said studies indicate using resources more efficiently will reduce energy and material consumption levels in industrial countries while actually improving the standard of living.

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"And because developed countries are the models that developing countries follow one way or another, the decisions they make about lifestyle and technologies could be decisive for the world as a whole," he said.

Sustainable development implies meeting the needs of the present while preserving the environment and natural resources for future generations.

Opening the Sixth International Conference on Pollution in Metropolitan Cities (Polmet 2000) in

Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the annual increase in the American population of 2.6 million people puts more pressure on the world's resources than the 17 million people added in the Indian population each year.

"Although the US has 5 per cent of the world's population compared to India's 16 per cent, the US uses some 25 per cent of the world's energy compared to India's 3 per cent, emits 22 per cent of the world's carbon dioxide compared to India's 3 per cent,

and accounts for 25 per cent of the world's gross national product compared to India's 1 per cent.

"And yet, despite all the odds, developing countries like India and others must continue to operate in a world in which the resource gap between most developing and industrial nations is widening, in which the industrial world dominates in the rule-making of some key international bodies, and in which the industrial world has already used much of the planet's ecological capital," Dr

Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said the mid-term prospects for industrial countries indicate a growth of between 3 and 4 per cent, the minimum that international financial institutions consider necessary if these countries are going to play a part in expanding the world economy.

"Such growth rates could be environmentally sustainable if industrialised nations continue their recent shifts for less material- and energy-intensive activities

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and the improvement of their efficiency in using materials and energy," he said.

But as industrialised nations use less materials and energy, they will provide smaller markets for commodities and minerals from developing nations. This will affect the growth of the developing countries unless new markets are found among the developing

countries themselves.

"Unfortunately, the attack by currency traders on the tiger economies of East Asia has stunted their growth as a new market. Malaysia alone lost US\$250 billion (US\$1 = RM3.80) in purchasing power because of the ringgit's devaluation and the depression in the share prices," Dr Mahathir said.

He said those whose activities can destroy wealth and therefore purchasing

power must be curbed if the world is serious about achieving sustainable development whether in the rich or poor countries.

"But despite the concerns expressed about the environment by the rich, they are unwilling to do anything to curb the currency traders and the short term capitalists...Poverty, we must always remember, is almost synonymous with environmental degradation," Dr Mahathir added.

He said future patterns of agriculture and forestry development, energy use, industrialisation and human settlements can be made far less material intensive, and hence both more economically and environmentally efficient.

"Under these conditions, a new era of growth in the world economy can widen the options available to developing countries. Reforms at international levels are needed to deal simulta-

neously with economic and ecological problems in ways that allow the world economy to stimulate the growth of developing countries while giving greater weight to environmental concerns," Dr Mahathir said.

The four-day Polmet conference, the first to be held outside Hong Kong and China, is organised by the Environmental Management and Research Association of Malaysia.