

PM says no to nuke power

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We have yet to perfect the use of the energy: Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: Malaysia will not use nuclear power and also hopes that other countries will not build such power plants.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today: "God forbid that nuclear warheads should ever be fired at anyone, as we don't really know whether they can be defused or decommissioned or rendered harmless."

Speaking at the Asia Oil and Gas conference luncheon address, he said: "I frankly don't trust nuclear power and our knowledge of its use and our nuclear engineering expertise are still very primitive.

"We hear of too many accidents and we know that

having released the power of nuclear fusion, we seem quite unable to stop it."

Mahathir said the use of hydrogen and fuel cells hold the biggest promises and governments as well as the private sector must allocate more funds and manpower to perfect the hydrogen engine and the efficiency of fuel cells instead.

The prime minister's speech, themed *Cooperation Towards an Environmentally More Friendly and Cleaner Energy*, also questioned why environmentalists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are protesting against the development of hydro power in poor, energy-starved countries.

"I am very suspicious

especially of the involvement of NGOs from rich countries which are usually responsible for provoking the people in poor countries and the local NGOs to protest."

Mahathir said the NGOs must know that they are actually perpetuating the poverty of deprived people in poor countries.

"Are they more concerned about the environment and carbon sink for rich countries than they are for the well-being of the poor people and do they want the poor to continue to be poor?" he asked.

He said developing hydro power not only requires clearing of forest which would be inundated but also the careful preservation on

a permanent basis of water catchment area.

"Of course, some people have to be moved out, but they can be fairly compensated and will be much richer from the compensation paid to them."

He said hydro power is the most viable and cheapest of the non-polluting source of power as it will reduce the need for thermal power stations which are more polluting and expensive.

"Hydro power involves the creation of beautiful lakes and landscaping which have many spin-offs and a poor country can become rich merely by developing hydro power and selling the excess power that is generated," he said.