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# Dr M: Charge Western nations

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## They are robbing us of brilliant students

**LANGKAWI:** Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has suggested that countries should start charging developed nations for the intellectual properties "that have been robbed from us."

The former prime minister told delegates at the Langkawi International Dialogue that developed nations did not pay a single cent when they "whisked away" brilliant students but poor countries had to "empty their pockets" just to get drugs for HIV/AIDS that they could not afford.

Dr Mahathir took the microphone to air his views after a delegate had expressed frustration over difficulties in getting hold of drugs for HIV/AIDS because they were "too expensive for less developed countries in Africa to provide to the millions of sufferers."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi then said that he would like Dr Mahathir, who was a delegate at the LID, to say a few words "as he is experienced in dealing with the issue."

Dr Mahathir went on to say that if companies from developed countries claimed that drug prices had to be high to compensate for their research work, then poor countries should also ask for compensation for the "loss

of our brilliant students, our Intellectual Properties (IPs), to them."

"As always, I have a radical solution," he said and drew laughter from the Prime Minister and the floor.

"They (companies) say millions of dollars were spent on research, experiments and what not until the right drugs for HIV/AIDS were found. They claim that they need to recover the expenses by fixing a high price for the drugs. Fair enough.

"But our countries spent money educating our people, right from kindergarten to university and after spending that much of money, only a handful are brilliant.

"Yet, they come and grab our IPs to work in their countries without paying us anything, whereas for their IP, we have to pay and the poor cannot avail themselves of the drugs when it is they who really need them.

"It would be good if we can work together and apply whatever little pressure. A lot of little pressure can make big pressure. We have to keep on hammering on this," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had spoken on the matter during his visits to many countries but was met with "absolute silence."