

Help fight for fair prices, Unesco is urged

RICH NATIONS CAN HELP EASE BURDEN: MAHATHIR

PARIS, Wednesday.

MALAYSIA called for Unesco's support today in persuading the extraordinary session of the UN General Assembly early next year to act on unfair commodity prices.

The call was made by the leader of the Malaysian delegation, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, at the 18th session of Unesco's gene-

ral conference here.

The Education Minister said if the developed countries — which controlled commodity prices — practised fairness and consideration in their pricing policy, the majority of Unesco member States would be much wealthier than they were now.

"Good commodity prices which enrich the primary producers would not only enhance their capacity to benefit from Unesco aid, but would actually diminish the need for such aid," he added.

These enriched nations might become a source of aid for Unesco work.

Dr. Mahathir noted the Unesco Director-General's remark that "a greater number of member States are still dependent on the primary sector, and their economies remain based mainly — if not wholly — on natural resources".

He said: "The implication is that natural resources do not bring about wealth. It is true because the consumers of these primary products control the prices through their control of the world commodity markets.

"The prices are kept

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Mahathir tells of Western ideas that curb progress

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artificially low and are not related to the usefulness of these products."

Malaysia, as one of the primary producers, had always been subjected to the vagaries of world commodity prices.

Prices of Malaysian tin and rubber have no bearing on their usefulness in manufacturing.

Consequently, Malaysia's wealth is not commensurate with the industry and intelligence of her people, Dr. Mahathir added.

Dr. Mahathir then drew attention to the "new hedonistic and permissive changes" in Western culture which have been rapidly disseminated throughout the world.

He said the impact of

these new values on the culture of developing countries had been such as to impede their ability to progress.

"The effect of drug-taking, hippism and general disrespect for the law, for example, has been to retard the progress of education, the production of the necessary trained manpower, and the organisation and employment of this manpower for development."

Non-culture

He warned that if the spread of the "more deleterious culture-destroying influence" of the developed nations was not checked, Unesco's work would not yield results commensurate with the efforts, time and money.

Dr. Mahathir told the conference that it was for this reason that South-East Asian countries were developing

pride in indigenous culture as a barrier against the devitalising influence of non-culture from the West.

"This project which is financed by Unesco is not merely an academic exercise but is intended to develop pride in our own culture as a protection against the spread of an alien and destructive culture," he said.

He hoped that this aspect of Unesco's work would be "given new dimensions."

A concerted effort should also be made in all regions to build up resistance towards destructive influences by preserving and developing indigenous national cultures compatible with progress and development, he added.

Dr. Mahathir said Malaysia was also pleased to note that Unesco's Executive Board had approved in May this year the principle of a legal relationship between the organisation and the South-East Asian Ministers' of Education Organisation, or SEAMEO.