

# MAHATHIR STINGER AT THE UN

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UNITED NATIONS, Thurs — Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday charged the world's richest nations with pursuing economic policies that have forced Third World countries to sell their souls in order to survive.

In an address to the General Assembly, he said the developed nations maintained their global economic dominance by manipulating commodity prices and erecting tariff barriers against manufactured goods from the Third World.

"Our patience and sense of fair play are being taxed to the limit with the market manipulations abroad which in effect reduce our people to underpaid labourers," he said.

"Such is the fate of the producers of primary commodities that they now have to sell three to five times more of their pro-

duce in order to buy the same amount of manufactured goods from the developed countries as they did 20 years ago," he said.

"Indeed, many poor countries have to sell their souls in order merely to survive."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia, a major producer of tin, rubber and palm oil, was no less entitled to fair prices for its products than a producer of manufactured goods in the developed world.

"While the manufactured goods that we buy are priced according to the cost of production and marketing and, of course, a hefty profit, the prices of primary products seem to bear no relation to any of these costs.

"They are priced according to the whims and fancies of a host of people who have nothing to do with their production."

He branded the developed

world's commodity exchanges, which set prices for major commodities such as tin, sugar, cocoa and coffee, "exclusive clubs where the producers are unable to get membership."

The recession has hit primary-producing countries hard, cutting their foreign exchange earnings as commodity prices have fallen and raising the cost of their loan repayments.

As methods of curing the world economy, he prescribed lower interest rates and reduced protectionism in the developed world.

Turning to political questions, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: "Weak countries like Afghanistan, Kampuchea and Lebanon are trodden over by the boots of invading armies as the rest of the world stands by.

"International law and order has truly broken down. Might is now the only thing that is right."

He condemned the Vietnamese military presence in Kampuchea and said the world must give attention to the problem before big-power rivalry in the region turned into open confrontation.

Malaysia supports the anti-Vietnam coalition government formed last June by three exiled Kampuchean resistance groups under the leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also called on the United States to reconsider its position on arms sales to Israel.

"Israel is a bully. If it is any bigger or stronger, the world will not be safe," he said.

He hailed Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat's departure with his guerillas from Beirut as an act of statesmanship, but added the sacrifice had been in vain. — Reuter.