

EEC criticised for keeping others out

NST - 1 MAR 1983

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The European Economic Community (EEC) was today criticised for depriving Asean and other developing nations of a share of the rich markets in Europe.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the EEC has used its collective strength to keep these nations away from the European markets even for manufactured products based on the natural resources of these developing countries.

Shackles

Speaking at the opening of the Asean-EEC Industrial Conference here, the Prime Minister said he was making these statements because "we need to face the truth" of the situation if any meetings between them are to be worthwhile.

In the past, he said members of the EEC and other developed nations,

Developing nations not getting a share of the market, says Dr Mahathir

have been happy to keep Asean nations and other developing countries merely as suppliers of raw commodities, both agricultural and mineral.

"Some of the Asean countries have found to their dismay, that political independence which threw away the shackles of colonialism brought forth another evil in the form of economic dependence — a new form of colonialism," he said.

It was this feeling of disenchantment and helplessness that has

forced developing countries around the world to become intractable.

This and the awareness of the near collapse of the world economic system should make Asean and EEC nations realise the need to work together for mutual benefit.

Stability

"The future well-being of both our regions, one representing an economic force of today and the other an emerging economic force of tomorrow — can only be engen-

dered if there is genuine desire by members of the EEC to assist in the fulfilment of the legitimate aspirations of the people and nations of Asean."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir listed four things that Asean nations did not want.

● They did not want to continue to be the plantations and mines for Europe or the rest of the world.

● They do not cherish the dubious honour of being world leaders in the production of raw commodities whose prices are dictated by the tender mercies of market manipulators and close shop trading systems in Europe and other parts of the world.

● They did not want to see their people breaking their backs to till the soil and mine the land for depleting commodities only to find that those who work the hardest are those who obtain the least economic benefits for their endeavours.

● They do not want to perpetuate their manufacturing sectors at the lowest ranges of the scale of world technology.

He was pleased that the EEC had arranged the seminar to examine the prospects of manufacturing agricultural machineries, machine tools and processing machines in Asean.

However, he knew that the EEC would not relocate their industrial operations in Asean for the sake of friendship and other rhetoric.

"What we in the Asean region offer to all industrialists from developed countries, including the EEC, is a region of stability and dynamic growth where you can invest with confidence and make reasonable profits," he said.

There is a need for manufacturers in the EEC to look towards Asean as partners especially in the face of escalating costs and the realisation of the laws of comparative advantage.