

PM: DON'T HAMPER FREER TRADING

Ⓟ Dr. Mahathir - oversea trips.

S 00 OCT 1988

NEW YORK, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the United Nations that he ~~hoped~~ plans for an integrated European market by 1992 will not obstruct efforts for greater trade liberalisation.

The Prime Minister said the developed countries in particular must curb domestic pressures for protectionist policies which had proven to be myopic, leading to distortions in trade and stifling growth and expansion.

He said Malaysia, as a primary commodities producer heavily dependent on exports of manufactured goods, attached great importance to the trade liberalisation talks under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that began in Uruguay in 1986.

"While the objective of the Uruguay talks is to retain an open international trading system and to promote increased trade liberalisation, we are also concerned about the opposing trend of increasing integration which brings about greater exclusion," he said in his speech at the general assembly yesterday.

"It is our hope therefore that the intentions of the EEC to achieve an integrated internal market by 1992 do not obstruct efforts aimed at greater trade liberalisation," he added.

Dr Mahathir said trading nations must

also agree on a more realistic and broad-based action on their currency realignment.

Agreements confined only to an exclusive group had proved disastrous to the poorer nations whose currencies and small trade advantages had been seriously affected, he said.

In his 40-minute speech, Dr Mahathir also appealed for a full-time interna-

tional authority to eradicate poverty to be set up.

"This civilisation of ours will be condemned by posterity if we can put man on the moon but cannot give enough help to the needy on earth at only a fraction of the cost," he said.

He said people were always concerned over extreme disparity between the rich and poor within any country "but in some countries there is no disparity. Everyone is just poor."

He said the world had no excuse to allow millions of people to suffer hunger and poverty when "we spend billions on weapons, on preserving the beauty of nature, the trees and the forests, the rare insect species and other things that we claim will enhance the quality of our life."

Dr Mahathir said the response of millions of ordinary people to appeals for aid to the suffering poor was laudable. "but the task is too big for ad hoc charitable efforts."

He told reporters later that Malaysia would follow up on the suggestion for such an authority at the third committee of the organisation which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural aspects. -
Reuter