

NGOs protecting rich nations' interests'

By ANNA TAING

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(P)

CERTAIN non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are protecting the economic interests of developed countries under the guise of saving the environment and promoting the welfare of mankind, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said non-trade related issues such as the environment, human rights and democracy are now being linked to international trade, to hamper growth and development of Third World and emerging economies.

He was speaking at the opening of the conference of Malaysia's heads of missions abroad held in conjunction with the launching of the Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations in Petaling

Jaya yesterday.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Greens, an environmental group that emerged in the 1980s, succeeded in various tactics aimed at imposing its colonial attitude, on the pretext of protecting the environment.

Europe and the US, he said, are trying to "colonise" countries with their economic muscle after having lost their political power in many former colonies.

He said the NGOs are trying to undermine the stability of developing countries by various means, such as violating laws of host countries. "They have succeeded in using certain groups in the country to hamper development efforts, in particular, by sabotag-

ing the country's exports which can compete with those from their countries," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also pointed out that Malaysia's "harmless" proposal to form the East Asia Economic Group (EAEG) has not been well received by some "powers" because of their own geopolitical interests. As such, the proposal has encountered some problems in becoming a reality.

"We should not give up because of baseless opposition," he said, urging that instead, Malaysia's diplomats the world over increase their efforts to explain the objectives of the EAEG to win support for the concept.