

# DR M: PALM OIL BAN DENIES FREE TRADE

**European nations' plan will affect hundreds of thousands of workers, says PM**

NEW YORK

**T**HE proposal by European countries to ban the import of palm oil is a classic example of denial of free trade, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"Unable to sustain the competitiveness of their edible oils, a campaign is mounted to ban palm oil," he said in his address at the 74th United Nations General Assembly here on Friday.

He said the campaigns claimed that palm oil was poisonous, and that its cultivation destroyed the habitat of long-nosed monkeys and reduced carbon dioxide absorption.

Products of Europe, meanwhile, are labelled palm-oil free.

"Malaysia produces palm oil. Many poor countries produce palm oil. Malaysia will not clear more forests for palm plantations," Dr Mahathir said, adding that Malaysia's forest cover was at 55.3 per cent, exceeding the government's pledge at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992.

"Palm oil is a big contributor to our economy. There is no evidence that it is poisonous. We appeal to the good sense of the rich not to impoverish us, not to deprive hundreds of thousands of our workers from earning a living. You are doing a good deed by consuming palm oil."

Despite all the talk about free trade, new regulations that were detrimental to the development of poor countries continued to be introduced, he said.

"This is because proposals on rules and regulations are made by the rich, often secretly. The poor are forced to accept them. One example is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). It was cooked up in Washington with inputs from their big businesses.

"In the agreement, governments of small countries could be



**LOKMAN MANSOR**

forced to compensate big foreign companies with huge sums of money should their decision affect the profitability of the companies, including future profit."

Fortunately, he said, after the United States pulled out of the TPP, the agreement had become more palatable even though conditions for trade were laid down.

"We are told that we must remove duties on imports, or reduce them so that foreign products can knock out our infant industries. We are reduced to exporting only raw material. How do we industrialise and create jobs for our people?"



*The 74th United Nations General at the UN headquarters in New York*