

MAHATHIR: UNDP REPORT IS UNFAIR

By Wong Chun Wai

MIRI, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has described as unfair a United Nations Development Programme report, which said Malaysia had a low level of human freedom.

The Prime Minister asked whether it was possible to make comparisons on freedom and democracy between different countries.

He said powerful nations curbed international freedom by interfering in the affairs of smaller nations.

"The bigger countries have the tendency to overpower the smaller ones.

"Where is the freedom,

if what the small countries want to do is blocked by them?" he asked, citing as an example the East Asia Economic Grouping (EAEG) proposed by Malaysia.

He said it seemed that "everything must be referred to them (the powerful countries)."

The UNDP Human Development Report 1991, released yesterday, ranked Malaysia 55th among 88 countries in the Human Freedom Index. The same report praised Malaysia for having a high level of human development.

Speaking to newsmen after a four-day visit to Sarawak, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia did not need the kind of freedom

that allowed the right to riot.

He asked whether freedom meant the right of the international press to "black out reports when I say something factual, while they can write dirty things about us."

He asked also whether there was freedom when Malaysia was ruled by the colonialists and people could not elect their own leaders.

"The moment we rule ourselves, they talk about freedom," he said.

The Prime Minister said that despite talks about freedom, immigrants in some countries were discriminated against simply because they were of a different race.

In Australia, he said, Aborigines were mistreated and "shot at like dogs," in contrast to the orang asli in Malaysia, who were well cared.

"The Australian Aborigines have no education, are dying and constantly being arrested and put in jail," he said, adding that there were cases of Aborigines hanging themselves in prison.

"This is the problem. They (the other nations) think they can run our country better than we can, but they cannot even run their own country," he said.

Dr Mahathir asked which of the countries had managed to match Malaysia's 10 per cent economic growth attained

last year.

He mentioned a report in the *Economist* that claimed that the Proton Saga was a Japanese car, adding that Britain imported Nissans from Japan and exported them to Europe as British-made cars.

He added that the Japanese-made Honda Legend had been renamed Sterling in Britain.

On whether he was angry with the UNDP report, he replied: "I am not angry, I am used to it."

When pointed out that the report had rated Malaysia as having high levels of human development, Dr Mahathir said: "They rub your back and then punch you in the nose."