

Mahathir: Groups out to hurt

Malaysia

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. —
The United Nations Development Programme report which said Malaysia had a “low level of human freedom” was made in the interest of certain groups to smear the country’s image, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said he was puzzled by the nature of the report as UNDP had never publicised such reports in the past.

“Who are they (UNDP) to say that they can assess human rights? How do they do it (measuring values of human freedom)?” asked Dr Mahathir after chairing an Umno Supreme Council meeting.

“I do not see any purpose nor do I know why the report was published,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said the agency had made a “fantastic accusation” by saying that Israel had a higher level of human freedom than Malaysia.

“They (the Israelis) murder and dispossess Arabs of their homes and these are the people that the report is praising.

“If they (UNDP) think that Israel is better than us, they should go there (to Israel),” he said.

On the question of freedom and rights, Dr Mahathir cited as an example a European country which he said permitted sexual freedom for children at the age of 12.

“Is this why we are worse off in terms of human rights? Is this how they (UNDP) value human rights?” he asked.

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

He said such reports, which curbed international freedom in Asia, rarely focused on European countries.

“This has led me to believe there are racial sentiments when such reports are made,” he said.