

UNDP's method of ranking nations draws fire

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has questioned the criteria used by the United Nations Development Programme in ranking the country below Israel in human development in its 1993 report.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who criticised the report, said it must not be taken seriously.

"Obviously they have no idea of

what they are talking about," he said.

He said yesterday that their ignorance was obvious as Israel, where people are being killed daily and children shot, was ranked higher than Malaysia which was trying to create a stable atmosphere.

Asked what the government could do to overcome the negative image, Dr Mahathir said: "The best

thing we can do right now is to look after ourselves and do things the right way."

He said it was common now for the West to paint a negative picture of countries in the East and to ignore development efforts being made.

The report downgraded Malaysia further in the human development rankings. From 51st position last

year, it was placed 57th this year.

Israel was ranked 19th in this year's report and 18th last year.

From a high human development ranking country in 1991, Malaysia has slipped lower in terms of human development, the report said.

The report has also ranked the Russian Federation, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Hungary as having high human development.

The highlight of the report is the ranking of a Human Development Index, which combines life expectancy, educational attainment and basic purchasing power into one indicator of human development.

In 1991, Malaysia was classified in the same category as Vietnam and Iraq and almost the entire bloc of the communist countries for lack of human freedom.