

Malaysia in same league as developed countries

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has achieved a high score on the United Nations Human Development Index, placing it in the same league as many developed nations for the first time.

In its "Human Development Report 2006" launched yesterday, UNDP categorised Malaysia as a high human development country.

Although it has retained its 61st position out of 177 countries, its Score of 0.805 has now taken it out of the medium human development category into the top league, along with countries such as Japan, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the US.

In 1990, the country's score was 0.723. In 1980, it was 0.659.

Acknowledging this, "Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the achievement was an important; milestone as UNDP's human development index looked not only at gross domestic product but also at life expectancy, opportunities to access knowledge and a decent standard of living.

"This national achievement reflects our strong and long-standing dedication to developing our healthcare services, provision of amenities and infrastructure as well as our enduring commitment to education, training and human capital development."

He was speaking at the launch of the Royal Professor Ungku Aziz

COUNTRIES IN THE TOP LEAGUE

Malaysia

Japan

Australia

Canada

United Kingdom

United States

Chair and the Centre for Poverty and Development Studios at Universiti Malaya.

The HDI index is calculated based on three dimensions of human development - living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being; educated (measured by adult literacy and enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity).

In Southeast Asia, only Singapore and Brunei are categorised with high HDIs, while Indonesia and Thailand are still in the medium category.

On another matter, the Prime Minister was asked at a Press con-

ference later about the Democrats' sweeping victory in the United States elections and whether it was considered a sharp rebuke for US President George W. Bush's leadership.

He said he had predicted as much. "I thought it would happen that way and I thought that President Bush would suffer a loss.

"My opinion is that the president should take this as a very important message from the American voters.

"It is important that he makes some adjustments in his policy, especially those relating to Iraq and the Middle-East," he said.

To another question, Abdullah said the meritocracy system would stay, adding that he believed that Bumiputeras would

improve their performance at universities.

"This will be a challenge but I believe the Bumiputeras are willing to face this challenge."

When asked whether the current teaching of English through the Mathematics and Science subjects would be expanded to other subjects in order to increase the level of students' proficiency in the language, Abdullah disagreed.

"At the moment I don't think so, but in the teaching of English, there must be opportunities for students to discuss specific subjects in English

"It is only when they are given that opportunity and challenge that they will realise to what extent they have acquired proficiency in English," he said.