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When home is best for working mums

PETALING JAYA, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad suggested today that career women at certain levels and in certain sectors should perhaps stop working when they had more children and their husbands were earning enough to support the entire family.

The Prime Minister said this was because their role as mothers was vital in family development.

Giving priority to family development, he added, was one of the strategies towards achieving the Government's policy of a 70 million population for the country in 115 years' time.

The family, he said, was the foundation of a society or a community.

"It is here that women as mothers and educators in the home can play a key role," he said when opening a national-level conference of women's organisations at the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan).

He was accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah.

The Prime Minister said transitions that had occurred since the country

B y NURAINA SAMAD

achieved independence had brought about social changes that had threatened culture, unity, tradition and religion.

The values of women had, therefore, been influenced by economic and social progress.

Dr Mahathir pointed out that development could be achieved without discarding cultural values, tradition and religion.

"That is why I am stressing the importance of family development to ensure a stable family life and a generation that is healthy, intelligent, courteous and disciplined that will become responsible citizens."

Dr Mahathir said that while the Government encouraged and was proud to see more women embarking on careers in the various fields, it was nevertheless concerned over the imbalance between the need for progress, in family development and economic and social progress faced by successful working women.

Praising women for their ability to carry out dual responsibilities at work and at home, he said appropriate steps must, however, be adopted to enable mothers to discharge their family re-

sponsibilities while pursuing their careers.

He said part of the problem faced by women could be solved by "overcoming the current psychology that has influenced our women and society."

He cited, as an example, the growing number of women who had begun breastfeeding their babies as a result of campaigns highlighting the benefit of doing so.

Dr Mahathir said similar campaigns should be undertaken to get women to "care for their children when the situation permits."

In the past women were able to carry out various jobs besides raising children and looking into the welfare of their families.

However, with changing times more and more women began working and this had forced career women to look for domestic helpers to care for their children.

"Children become neglected when they are being looked after by different domestic helpers."

While the Government was happy with national development in terms of its infrastructure and physical progress, he said it was, however, saddened by the "slightly disrupted" fami-

★ See Page 2, Col 8

ly system.

As a result of this, an increasing number of young people had become involved in unhealthy activities.

"Although it is not the sole responsibility of the mother, nevertheless, we cannot deny that it is she who plays a key and more positive role."

Dr Mahathir said physical progress must be accompanied by spiritual development and a complete family that was trustworthy and one that adhered to high moral principles.

"Men need the support of women in the building of a healthy family as women are motivators for determining the direction society takes today.

"They must together

play a role and make constructive criticisms... they are society's conscience..."

Dr Mahathir said the Government would continue to give attention to questions relating to problems of women in the Government.

He called on women to give consideration to technological progress and to participate in Government programmes, such as modern agriculture and industry, so that they were not left behind.

The conference is jointly organised by the Prime Minister's Department, the National Board for Population and Family Development and the Malaysian Women Graduates Association.