

# Bringing the handicapped up to par Help disabled use their talent: Dr M

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KLANG, Tues. — The less fortunate citizens who are physically or mentally disabled should not be constantly reminded of their handicap, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today.

"What the physically and mentally able citizens should do is to encourage the less fortunate ones to utilise their hidden skills and talents wisely and profitably," he said.

Speaking at the Bengkel Daya, a sheltered workshop for physically disabled people, during a visit, Dr Mahathir said they had shown that they had the talent and skills to earn a living independently.

"In fact, when we witness their capabilities and talents, we sometimes tend to think that we are the ones who are handicapped," he said.

He was accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, Welfare Services Minister Datuk Abu Hassan Omar and Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Razali Haji Ali.

Dr Mahathir said the physically disabled must be trained to deploy their skills and talents usefully so that they could live on par with their fellow citizens who were slightly more fortunate physically.

"They must be given full encouragement so that they would not feel that they are being left out of society because of their handicap, which is no fault of theirs."

The Prime Minister said the recently completed Welfare Week celebrations showed the extent of talent and skills among the disabled.

By JEFFREY RAMAYAH

"The week-long celebrations also made the more fortunate people aware of their responsibility to provide adequate opportunities and programmes for the disabled to better their lot despite their handicaps."

Dr Mahathir said the officers and employees of the various agencies and institutions which carried out care and training programmes for the disabled must continue to work with dedication.

"Their past performances have shown that they really cared for the disabled and their efforts must be appreciated by all concerned."

Datuk Abu Hassan said employees at the various care and training centres for the disabled had increased their performance over the years.

He said the officers and staff at these centres would continue to work with dedication to look after the needs of the less fortunate.

Dr Mahathir, Dr Siti Hasmah and other guests earlier visited the workshop and witnessed the various vocational training facilities provided and the types of jobs undertaken by the disabled.

The guests were later entertained to a one-hour musical and cultural performance by the disabled from various training centres in the country manned by the Welfare Ministry.