

# PM: Don't ape West blindly

By Zulkifli Talib  
and P.P. Lau

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Malaysians must be discerning when imitating the West so as not to be caught in the social decay of the society, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the people should strive to preserve the social fabric in their efforts to achieve progress and development.

He said Malaysia too, wanted to develop like the West so as to achieve a higher standard of living and to avoid being oppressed by other countries.

"But there are many flaws in Western societies, one of which is the decay of the family institution," he said when launching the first National Family Day celebrations at the Bandar Tun Razak Football Stadium here.

Dr Mahathir said once the family institution was destroyed, there would be

no meaning to progress.

He said Westerners only appeared to be having the time of their lives but "their joy does not emanate from inner peace but through various forms of escapism."

He said the family institution had almost cease to exist in the West.

"There are Westerners who place so much importance on independence and self-interest that they refuse to get married. They live alone and have temporary relationships."

Dr Mahathir said many Western couples also refused to have children or abandoned their responsibilities once their children became teenagers.

"In the West, there are nuclear families comprising just the parents and the children. Grandparents and other relatives are regarded as strangers," he said, adding that they did not accept responsibility for what happened to their relatives.

The aged, he said, were dumped into old folks homes where they were

left to live out their days.

"Very often, the Government was held responsible for the welfare of the aged," he said.

He also spoke of the lack of parental control in Western societies, where teenagers took drugs and committed crimes.

Dr Mahathir said there were signs of decay in the social fabric of Malaysian families as the nation entered the era of second generation societies where people were born and bred in urban surroundings.

"In towns and cities, people have complete strangers as neighbours," he said, adding that the relationship between the second generation and the first generation who still live in rural areas was getting estranged.

The third generation would probably be totally cut off from their *kampung* roots, he said.

There was also attitude changes among the urban centre dwellers; the desire to be independent has led many a teenager to

move out of the house and find a job even before he is married.

"Last time, newly-weds lived with their parents or in-laws but now, young couples move into their own houses after marriage," he said, adding that this trend would erode the family institution system if left unchecked.

The Prime Minister said the Government did not want Malaysia to be a "welfare" country.

"We do not want to be an 'ala the West' welfare nation where the government is held responsible for looking after the old people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said racial assimilation was important to Malaysia because of the country's multi-ethnicity although some people disliked the word "assimilation."

"But inter-racial marriages should be accepted when they do not trespass the boundaries of an individual's tradition and religious sensitivities," he added.