

Mahathir stresses role of family in drug fight

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad underlined yesterday the importance of the family and community in the fight against drug abuse.

He said non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should contribute towards creating caring, concerned and informed family units.

Such family units would be able to protect and safeguard their young against the influence of drugs and a morally upright community would be less prone to the spread of drug abuse.

"Prevention really begins at home. The family is the most important unit in the fight against drug abuse," he said.

"Where the family system has broken down or family influence is not available, the problem of drug abuse becomes almost uncontrollable.

"The role of the family is to inculcate high moral values which will serve as a built-in mechanism against the lure of drugs. Next to the family is the community," Dr Mahathir said at the opening of the 14th International Federation of Non-Governmental Organisation conference for the prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse here.

"The fight against drug abuse must therefore focus largely on the role of the family and the community."

He said drug abuse and trafficking had become a major global problem and in terms of value, drug trafficking was 'now second only to the global arms trade.

"So widespread is the abuse of drugs that there is no way a country can deal with the problem purely on a national basis.

"Only an international effort, carefully co-ordinated, can be expected to yield tangible results," he said.

Drug abuse has become even more dangerous because of its association with AIDS, he added.

On Malaysia's tough anti-drug laws, Dr Mahathir said the death penalty was not just a punishment for traffickers, who were in fact murderers.

"It is also a reminder to society that it must appreciate the seriousness of the problem and that it must play a role to prevent the emergence of this criminal breed," he said.

He said those who wanted a life of luxury at the expense of others must be prepared to pay the penalty.

More than 500 experts and delegates from 20 countries are attending the five-day conference. It is the third time Kuala Lumpur is hosting an IFNGO conference.