

(P) Dr. M

Women must play bigger role,

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says Dr M

By Balbeer S. Jessy

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The role of women in Malaysian society should not be reduced. On the contrary, it must be expanded to help speed up the nation's economic growth and modernisation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the time had also come for men to admit that in certain fields such as education and business, women sometimes performed better than them.

"Men have to admit this fact and start giving women the place they deserve in society...those who deserve promotions should not be deprived of the opportunity just because they are women," he said.

Addressing more than 2,500 women in conjunction with the 30th Women's Day assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here, Dr Mahathir said due to their vital role in society, women must be treated fairly by men.

"The fact that Malaysian women are not militant cannot be used as an excuse by men to take advantage of them."

Dr Mahathir said it was a blessing that Malaysian women, although demanding equal rights, did not resort to extreme measures like their counterparts in the West.

He was happy to note that Malaysian women had refused to emulate the Western concept of "Women's Lib" in their actions.

By doing this, Malaysian women have retained their moral values, thus safeguarding the institutions of marriage and family.

He said in the past, Westerners emphasised morality as being the virtue of a husband not cheating on his wife and vice versa.

"But today, what is demanded by them is not fidelity but the right to practise the notion that anything you can do, I can too. As a result, marriages collapse to the extent that the institution of marriage is not important anymore."

Due to this, natural families are going out of existence and are being replaced by single-parent families in which the children do not know their fathers.

He said Malaysian women must resist negative influences to avoid the destruction of the character of society as has occurred in the West.

"The role of women is important in the efforts to turn Malaysia into a developed nation by the year 2020.

"We have only a short time and there is so much to be done to preserve healthy

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PM calls for revival of extended family concept

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feminine values so that our success will not destroy the character of our society."

Referring to the dilemma women face when required to choose between taking up a job and raising a family, Dr Mahathir said the days when women had to become mothers and housewives leaving the role of being breadwinner to men were gone because the nation needed the services of women.

"Those who are highly

qualified but prefer not to work after starting families will be wasting the thousands of ringgit spent in providing them with education vital for their and the nation's good."

To resolve this, Dr Mahathir suggested reviving the "extended family" concept whereby parents, in-laws or siblings lived together and helped to look after the children.

Dr Mahathir said one could engage a foreign maid but this could lead to the children growing up in-

clined towards foreign culture. They might also be weak in their mother tongue or even lose it altogether.

"There is a great possibility that the children will become disoriented and be unable to adapt themselves well to Malaysian society.

"They will be denied total motherly love resulting in their not understanding their responsibilities towards their own children in future," he said.

The Prime Minister also said that young girls should

not be prohibited from working in factories just because their parents feared they might get involved in undesirable activities.

This is because their input is essential for industrialisation and national development to succeed. By going to work, they can also help to improve their families' financial standing.

On top of that, he said, by working, the girls would be better able to learn about life in the modern world and acquire skills and knowledge to become citizens who

could compete fairly with others.

"What is necessary (to prevent them from going wayward) is their participation in healthy pursuits such as sports, club activities, religious classes and social events which can help them utilise their spare time without succumbing to boredom."

Dr Mahathir suggested that women's organisations and factory managements help provide facilities for them to engage in these activities.