

Dr Mahathir: Train orphans to be self-reliant

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Orphans should be given training and education so that they will be self-reliant and not a burden to society, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said that besides providing them with the necessary training to prepare them for career prospects, a change of attitude was also important so that they could compete with others without more aid.

"Our aim of providing the assistance is to enable them to face challenges and be able to compete with the others.

"Therefore, the assistance must be in the form of education and training to prepare them for work," Dr Mahathir said at the launching of the Malaysian Orphans Welfare Foundation (Yatim) at Pusat Islam today.

He said that since orphans did not have their parents to take care of them, it was the responsibility of the community to undertake that role.

"However, just as we should not pamper our children, we should not also pamper the orphans so that they can be self-reliant."

Also present at the launch were National Unity and Community Development Minister Datuk Napsiah Omar, adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin, who is Yatim adviser, and chairman of Yatim's board of trustees Datuk Ahmad Sebi Abu Bakar.

Dr Mahathir also said that it was the responsibility of the people to help the orphans and they should refrain from being cruel or suppress the orphans as this

was in line with the teachings of Islam.

He said the prosperity of the country had enabled more people to venture into business and become successful in their ventures and they, in turn, had not forgotten their responsibilities towards the unfortunate.

He said this was in line with the Government's Caring Society concept, and he was happy that it had gone down well with Malaysians.

Dr Mahathir said he was thankful that, in Malaysia, those who were wealthy were always willing to render aid to the unfortunate.

Such a situation, he said did not happen in many countries and even in some rich countries, the people do not bother about carrying out welfare work.

Dr Mahathir also hoped that with Hari Raya approaching, caring Malaysians would not forget members of the security forces who were on duty, including those undergoing peace-keeping duty in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He said Malaysians could do their part by sending Hari Raya goodies to the soldiers at the border in the jungles or those on duty overseas.

He expressed gratitude that, with the caring spirit of Malaysians, this was possible and would help enlighten the burden of the soldiers of having to be away from the families during the Hari Raya.

Yatim was set up in 1992 with the aim of looking after the welfare of orphans who are academically excellent, regardless of their ethnic group or religion.