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Mahathir-taekwondo

MARTIAL ARTS IMPORTANT IN MOULDING NATION'S CHARACTER, SAYS DR M

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KUALA TERENGGANU, July 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today opened an international taekwondo championships here and said martial arts, with discipline and self-control as its basic requirements, are useful in moulding the character of a nation.

Martial arts can develop the younger generation to be more responsible and to have qualities that are important to nation-building and the development of human values, he said when opening the Ninth World Taekwondo Championships at the Sultan Ismail Nasiruddin Shah Stadium here.

"Today, in a world where the powerless and the weak are being openly oppressed, it becomes our social responsibility to inculcate and nurture in the young an understanding of right and wrong and the need to uphold good moral values," he said.

"Although this is not a proper forum to dwell on such a philosophical issue, the sight of the contingents today reminds me of the hope for the international community to do what is morally right, especially when so many around the world are being so blatantly forced to migrate or be massacred," he said.

The Yang Dipertuan Muda of Terengganu, Tengku Mizan Zainal Abidin, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism Datuk Sabharuddin Chik and International Taekwondo Federation (ITF) president and founder Gen. Choi Hong Hi were present. -- more

Mahathir-taekwondo 2 (last) Kuala Terengganu

Dr Mahathir said that organising such a big event could not have been a better way of introducing Terengganu to foreign participants and delegates, especially in terms of its strategic location.

"The championships which are being held here can complement the state's efforts to promote not only tourism but also to encourage foreign and local investments to be located in the East Coast region generally and Terengganu in particular," he added.

Besides this, Dr Mahathir said, it would also go a long way towards strengthening the relations between Malaysia and other countries, particularly in helping to bridge the cultural gap between member countries.

"I understand that taekwondo in Malaysia had its beginning in 1963 when Gen. Choi was (North) Korea's first ambassador (to Malaysia). Today, with more than 100,000 members, I am sure this occasion will be a special home-coming for him. His early efforts in introducing taekwondo in Malaysia have proved to be seeds well-sown," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped that participants and delegates will take some time off to see and enjoy the beautiful and enchanting spots in the East Coast and bring home the memories of Terengganu and Malaysia.

More than 800 participants and officials from 72 countries are here for the four-day meet, to be held at the state's indoor stadium. -- Bernama

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