

Martial arts can help mould nation, says PM

By Manan Osman and Rosli Zakaria

KUALA TERENGGANU, Thurs. -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said martial arts are useful in moulding the character of a nation.

"With discipline, that is, self-control as its basic requirement, martial arts can develop our younger generation to be more responsible and to have qualities that are important to nation-building and the development of human values.

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

values," he said at the opening of the Ninth World Taekwondo championship at Sultan Ismail Nasiruddin Shah stadium here today.

He said this taekwondo championship was therefore most appropriate as a platform where the fostering of friendship among participants could be enhanced and to promote world peace and goodwill.

He said although today's function was not a proper forum to dwell on such philosophical issue, the sight of the contingents reminded him of the hope for the international community to do what was morally right, especially when so many around the world were being blatantly forced to migrate or massacred.

"It is no longer considered honourable to get

slightly hurt in order to help the less fortunate," he added.

On the championship, which is being held in the country for the first time, Dr Mahathir said the occasion was made possible by the confidence placed by the international Taekwondo Federation in its Malaysian counterpart.

He said Malaysia was happy to play host to such an event especially now that preparations were underway for Malaysia to host the Commonwealth Games in 1998.

He said an international event of such magnitude might be quite a new experience for Terengganu, and he therefore commended the efforts by the State Government and the Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister and all officials involved in making

the staging of the event here possible.

"This could not have been a better way of introducing Terengganu to foreign participants and delegates especially in terms of its strategic location.

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

Besides, Dr Mahathir added, this event represented yet another opportunity for participants and delegates to get to know each other better.

"This will go a long way towards strengthening the relations between Malaysia and other coun-

tries, particularly in helping to bridge the cultural gap between member countries," he said.

The Prime Minister later witnessed various shows and demonstrations held in conjunction with the three-hour opening ceremony.

Also present were Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, the Yang di-Pertuan Muda of Terengganu who is patron of the main organising committee; and Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik.

Also present was International Taekwondo Federation president Gen Choi Hong Hi. Participants from 70 countries including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia are taking part in the five-day championship.