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BN to meet on social ills (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Barisan Nasional would hold a special meeting next month to get the co-operation of everyone to combat social ills affecting youths.

"I feel all parties should view the problem seriously, and that's why we feel it's good that the matter be discussed at a BN meeting," he said when responding to questions by reporters after chairing the weekly Cabinet meeting.

This week, the Cabinet met at the Bukit Tinggi resort, about 60km from here, instead of the Prime Minister's Department, where the meetings are normally held. This was to give the Ministers an opportunity to learn how the Japanese instil self-discipline through their tea ceremony.

In response to another question, he said: "As it will be difficult for us to come here just for the tea ceremony, we decided to ask them to set up a temporary Cabinet room for us to meet."

Earlier, he said the Cabinet discussed the social problems affecting youths but not in depth as there were other matters that had to be looked into.

He said the special BN meeting would discuss problems facing youths as well as several other issues.

He said all leaders of BN component parties would attend the meeting.

"We will also invite others who can assist."

Asked if he supported the decision of Umno Youth to launch a programme to identify problem schools and indisciplined pupils, he said: "If they do that ... we can obtain the information on the matter and take follow-up action."

Yesterday, Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the movement would conduct a nationwide study next month to identify schools with disciplinary problems.

Under the plan, Umno Youth will gather information with the co-operation of disciplinary teachers in affected schools, and pupils with serious disciplinary problems would be absorbed into the Briged Putra movement.

On the proposal by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak that the Juvenile Act be amended to hold parents responsible when their children are involved in social problems, Dr Mahathir said he had to study the proposal before commenting on it.

Social ills affecting youths have been making headlines in recent weeks after statistics showed that criminal activities committed by them were on the rise.

Responding to a question on why the Cabinet meeting was held in Bukit Tinggi, Dr Mahathir said: "We felt we should hold a Japanese tea ceremony to learn how the Japanese instil self-discipline."

"We wanted the Cabinet members to attend and see for themselves. We felt that the tea house in Bukit Tinggi is one of the suitable places to hold it."

The Japanese tea ceremony is also called chado or cha-no-yu, and is the traditional way of preparing, serving and drinking matcha (powdered green tea stirred in hot water).

Tea drinking, introduced from China, was first practised only by the Buddhist priests, and then samurai warriors in the early days, but gradually spread among the common people.

It was then turned into a form of art in the 16th century where emphasis

was placed on spiritual tranquillity and simplicity of taste.

Influenced by Zen Buddhism, the tea ceremony has in turn influenced many aspects of Japanese culture such as architecture, fine arts, ways of thinking and living as well as instilling discipline.

Tea ceremonies are normally held at chashitsu (tea rooms) which are offered at the resort, situated on a 6,400ha site, which is developed by Bukit Tinggi Resort Bhd, a member of the Berjaya Group.

The fully integrated and self-contained resort, provides among others, a range of recreational facilities including golf course, swimming pool, tennis and squash courts, sauna and gymnasium.

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