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PM to chair meeting on social ills among youths

Marina Tan

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Menteris Besar, Chief Ministers and Religious Department officials from all States will attend the special meeting tomorrow to discuss causes and find solutions to the increasing social problems affecting youths.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said today the meeting, which would be held at Pusat Islam, would be chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

It will also be attended by his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Social Ills.

"The non-Muslim Chief Ministers will send (Muslim) representatives," Abdul Hamid said after presenting contributions worth more than RM6,000 from the Islamic Welfare Society, or Perkim, to 66 inmates of the Selangor Cheshire Home in Selayang.

On Saturday, Anwar said the meeting had been called following increasing reports of social problems affecting the youths, especially those in the Klang Valley.

A study in the Klang Valley last year revealed shocking statistics on indiscipline among youths.

Anwar had said the problems affecting youths in the Klang Valley included gangsterism, dadah abuse and sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS.

Earlier, Abdul Hamid said Perkim's contribution to a multi-racial, multi-religious organisation like the Cheshire Home was a sign that Malaysians were able to distinguish between social and religious activities.

Only with such understanding and religious tolerance, he said, could Malaysians have a harmonious society.

"For example, if we have an electrical problem in a mosque, it is not necessary to call only Muslim electricians to fix it.

"We can call non-Muslim electricians and even have non-Muslim guests visiting our mosques since they are not taking part in the prayers," he said.

Perkim secretary-general Yaakob Lazim said the contributions were part of the body's nationwide annual collection for charity.

"This year we have collected RM60,000, compared to last year's total of RM30,000," he said, adding that this amount was divided among State Perkim chapters to be distributed at their discretion.

The 66 Cheshire Home inmates received RM30 and a food hamper each, he said, adding that the other Klang Valley beneficiary was the Kuala Lumpur Rotary-Perkim Rehabilitation Centre in Sentul.

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