

# Be sensitive to needs of children, urges Dr M

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PETALING JAYA: Society must be attentive and sensitive to cases of child abuse and not turn a blind eye to it. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the people must act on child abuse even if it was done by their neighbours or individuals they knew.

He said it was sad to know that such cases occurred in the country, noting that in some cases, the child died.

"It is sad and disappointing because children, who cannot protect themselves, depend on adults to protect them.

"The adults are not only supposed to be humane, they are also the child's protector. Those who abuse their children do not love them," he said in his speech when launching the *Say Yes for Children* global campaign organised by the National Unity and Social Development Ministry, attended by some 5,000 schoolchildren.

The Prime Minister also said parents should nurture their children from young and teach them positive values because this would shape their personality when they grow up.

"If they receive good education at home and in school, they will turn out to be good citizens, assets to themselves, their families, race and country," he said.

Parents must not always give in to their children but should reprimand them when they strayed.

"But parents must also acknowledge their children when they do good as this will make them feel that they are protected and loved," he said.

Dr Mahathir called on Malaysians to take the campaign seriously as it promoted the care and

protection of children and give them happier lives.

The campaign promotes 10 basic points: equal child opportunities, child care, education, stop child abuse and child exploitation, protecting the environment for children, giving priority to children, eradicating HIV/AIDS, protecting children against war and violent conflicts, poverty eradication and listening to the children.

The Prime Minister also took time to shake hands with the children. He visited the campaign's banner with the *Say Yes For Children* slogan, which used thumbprints of children. The banner was declared the largest banner by the Malaysia Book of Records.

He also gave out appointments letters to 18 members of the National Consultative and Coordination Council on Children.

They included members in the national council of welfare, child psychologists, those with legal background, experience in child policies and individuals who deal with child victims.

National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said the council would provide advice and input to help the Government monitor programmes and policies on children.

It would also help the ministry to draft the second action plan for children, she added.

"We will see whether the ministry adheres to the campaign's 10 basic actions in the services we provide for children as well as those by non-governmental organisations," she said.

She said the action plan for the safety and well-being of children included introducing a general policy guideline. This could be used by local governments in their by-laws for a child-friendly environment.