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Don't turn blind eye to young

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PETALING JAYA, Sat. - Society must not turn a blind eye to the exploitation and abuse of children, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said society had a moral obligation to protect the welfare and interests of children, irrespective of race, religion or creed.

"Children are too young to protect themselves and they look to their elders to take care of them," he said when launching the "Say Yes For Children Campaign."

The campaign was initiated by the Global Movement for Children as an international crusade to enable children and adults worldwide to speak out on actions which must be undertaken in order to improve the lives of children.

More than 5,000 children from the Klang Valley attended the launch.

Also present were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman and representatives of various agencies, schools and organisations.

Dr Mahathir described the exploitation and abuse of children as heinous crimes and urged society not to sweep known cases under the carpet.

Even the slightest knowledge of child abuse incidences and other forms of exploitation must be quickly highlighted to the relevant parties. "Even if the case involves a neighbour or someone you know, take some form of action."

Dr Mahathir said society must ensure the younger generation was instilled with positive and noble values as the young were the future of the nation.

"If we raise our children with good and holistic values, when they grow up, they will stick to them."

In this respect, parents and teachers play the most important roles.

"A child is born pure and innocent.

"Should they be involved in undesirable activities later, it is because they were not taught well."

Siti Zaharah, speaking to reporters later, said the newly formed 18-member National Consultative Council for Children would have its first meeting soon.

Among other things, it will look at the National Plan of Action and draw up guidelines like the formulation of children friendly by-laws.