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Dr Mahathir mobbed and given rousing welcome

PETALING JAYA, Sat. - It was an exhilarating time for the more than 5,000 children who were present at the launch of the "Say Yes For Children" campaign today.

Their enthusiasm was clearly seen as it took Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad almost 15 minutes to cover the 50 metres leading to the convention centre at Sunway Pyramid.

Mobbed by children wanting to shake his hand, he inched his way to the hall where he received a rousing welcome from children, parents and teachers.

A campaign dedicated to children, the launch was almost entirely handled by children. The prayer was led by a youngster - Khairul Zaim Ghazali.

The launch was equally impressive. When Dr Mahathir pulled a rope attached to a "watering can", "water" poured out and a flower bloomed.

Later, a sketch depicting five children from the future who were sent back in time to find the formula of Malaysia's success was staged.

Dr Mahathir also gave out appointment letters to members of the National Consultative Council for Children, which included New Straits Times group editor Datuk Ahmad A. Talib.

Today's launch saw a record set for the largest thumbprint banner in Malaysia, with 5,000 thumbprints spelling out "Say Yes For Children".

Run by the National Unity and Social Development Ministry, the campaign will look at ways to create a conducive and enabling environment for children to grow up in.

It is built on 10 imperatives.

They are "Leave No Child Out", "Put Children First", "Care For Every Child", "Fight HIV/AIDS", "Stop Harming and Exploiting Children", "Listen to Children", "Educate Every Child", "Protect Children From War", "Protect the Earth For Children" and "Fight Poverty: Invest In Children".

The campaign is part of the run-up to the UN Special Session on Children to be held from Sept 19 to 21 in New York.

Among the events lined for the campaign are a forum on Sept 8, a walkathon for children and talkshows.

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