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Globalisation can bring adverse effects on children

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Globalisation might seem a topic for adults but in reality, children are just as affected, sometimes more adversely, by the changes it brings.

Of all the social institutions, globalisation most profoundly affects the family.

Changes are caused by some of the very things the nation proudly touts as progress - urbanisation, industrialisation, migration, mass tourism, greater access to secondary, tertiary and overseas education, and increased female participation in the labour force.

The Welfare Department has studied such trends, and a paper was presented at the United Nations workshop on the impact of globalisation on economic, social, cultural and development rights on May 8.

The department noted that over the last decade, residential patterns were changing. More couples were opting for smaller families and also preferred to live on their own.

Also increasing was the number of single-parent families due to abandonment and divorce.

At the same time, "new ideas concerning appropriate and proper social roles for women" had emerged.

There has also been greater awareness on child abuse, domestic violence and the negative effects dysfunctional families had on children.

The paper also noted that Malaysia had developed various mechanisms for child protection, care and rehabilitation through hospitals and community efforts.

Malaysia has also made advances in health and education. For example:

- * The probability of a child dying (infant to one year) was 0.4 per cent per 1,000 live births in 1999. The global scenario was 58 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1997.

- * Eighty-six to 100 per cent of children below one year were immunised by 1997; the global scenario was 89 per cent.

- * The literacy rate of the population aged 15 years and above was 93.3 per cent in 2000; worldwide, the rate was 76 per cent in 1997.

- * School enrolment for boys and girls was almost equal at 50.4 percent for boys and 49.6 per cent for girls, respectively.

Also, recognising the effect of environmental factors on child development, the Government launched the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative in 1997, to guide environmental planning and development.

The national media has also been engaged to educate and influence children and youths.

These are some of the areas Malaysia will seek to improve on and add to when it attends the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children in New York from Sept 19 to 21.

The session will review progress made by UN member countries since the World Summit for Children in 1990.

Prior to the session, Malaysia will kick off its own "Say Yes for Children" campaign on Sept 1.

It will be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The campaign is part of a larger one launched in March by the Global Movement for Children.

It aims to gather support to ensure governments are accountable in the run-up and after the UN special session.

The public can join this campaign by visiting
www.globalmovementforchildren.org.

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