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Home is starting place for ensuring basic rights of children are protected

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Governments worldwide must meet their obligations to ensure that children's rights are protected and respected.

These responsibilities should be shared with individuals, organisations, religious groups and the private sector.

This is in line with the second imperative action of the Say Yes for Children campaign themed Put Children First.

The fundamental rights which should be entrenched are the right to survival and opportunity, protection from abuse and exploitation and the right to have a say in decisions that affect them.

Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) member Datuk Lee Lam Thye, who is also a social activist, said the home was the basic and fundamental place to start when it comes to giving care and love for children.

"Parents must ensure proper care and guidance is given, such as the right to formal and informal education.

"Informal education here refers to instilling noble values in children.

"It is the responsibility of schools to instil leadership values and also to ensure education is effectively imparted.

"It is also the role of the community to protect children when they are aware that they are being neglected and abused. Child abuse is deplorable and despicable. It is the role of the community to inform the authorities to take the necessary action.

"The community should educate children about social ills so they will not be placed in danger and become victims," he added.

Lee said there were sufficient laws to protect children's rights.

The campaign is part of the run-up to the United Nations special session on children to be held from Sept 19 to 21 in New York.

Ten teenagers will be part of the Malaysian delegation to the special session, which will be led by National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the national-level campaign. Among the activities planned are a children's forum, a walkathon for children and talkshows.

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 to improve their lives.

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