

11/09/2001

Preparations going on for UN's special session on children

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Much preparatory work has been done for the United Nations Special Session on Children that takes place in New York from Sept 19 to 21.

Malaysian Child Resource Institute project director Madeleine Yong said the three-day conference would not be enough for leaders present to identify, discuss and come to an agreement on all the problems affecting children worldwide.

To overcome this, many regional conferences were held to identify the problems and issues, and come up with a document that the leaders could sign.

She said these regional conferences were organised worldwide by the Unicef and the non-governmental organisations - Save the Children, World Vision and Plan International.

Yong said the conferences were also attended by children and participating countries highlighted the problems they faced on children issues.

Malaysia will be sending 10 teenagers to join the National Unity and Social Development Ministry's delegation to the session.

National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman will lead the Malaysian delegation.

Others in the delegation include officials from the Ministry, the Education and Health Ministries and the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department.

The Ministry is expected to release the names of the teenagers this Wednesday and eighteen-year-old Kon Ting Sei hopes to be one of them.

"I have submitted my application to the Ministry and hopefully they will select me."

However, he said, that even if not chosen by the Ministry, he would still make his way to the session.

He said a lot of things would take place at the concurrent session and he was preparing a multimedia presentation which summarised the outcome of the two forums.

Kon was involved in two regional conferences - the first and second East Asia Pacific Children and Young People Forum held earlier in the year in Thailand and Laos. He also attended the fifth Asean Ministerial Consultation, held in Beijing.

In the first forum, he said participants discussed in much detail children's problems like exploitation and education, adding that it was later compiled and the common issues identified.

Kon said they then came up with suggestions on priorities and how to counter the problems.

"This was then presented in Beijing and it was accepted by the Ministers."

He said the second forum was on how to implement the suggestions and equip the participants with skills like lobbying and dealing with the media.

As a run-up to the special session, the "Say Yes For Children" campaign was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Sept 1.

The "Say Yes for Children" campaign is part of a global crusade to enable children and adults to speak out on ways to improve the lives of children. It is built on 10 imperatives.

They are "Leave no child", "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".

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