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Sept 1 launch for 'Say yes to children' campaign

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Love me, care for me ... if all children are cared for and sent to school, the world will be a happy place to live.

- Six-year-old R. Ramesh

THE sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. So they say, and nobody should argue. It's in the Bible too.

In the context of this country, it should mean that parents, the Government and everyone else have to strive towards making Malaysia a better place for the future generation to live in.

Or else our children will be held responsible for our wrongdoings and blunders.

A place with the environment that meets our children's physical, spiritual, and mental needs, and an environment that enables them to cope better with growing pains.

For the betterment of the children's lot, the Government, the private sector and non-governmental organisations also have roles to play.

Everyone has a duty to fight against discrimination among children due to colour, gender, physical disabilities or traditions that parents had passed on them, for example.

Thus, it is heartening that the National Unity and Social Development Ministry is coming up with a campaign called "Say Yes For Children", which will be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Sept 1.

It will be part of the global campaign to ensure greater action for children worldwide, holding governments accountable in the lead-up to, and after the three-day United Nations Special Session on Children in New York from Sept 19.

The ministry's campaign is primarily aimed at raising awareness among the people, corporate citizens and NGOs on the need to improve the environment, legislations, education and health provisions, and many other things to make life better for the future generation.

But noble as the intention goes, there seems to be a lack of seriousness and commitment on the part of the ministry in implementing the campaign programmes. Or at least this is the impression that members of the public are getting.

Many may have heard the "Katakan Ya Untuk Kanak-Kanak" brief messages over the radio and seen the campaign logo in the newspapers, but little else.

Are there forums on children's issues, or concerts and sporting events for children? Mind you, it is just three days before the campaign's launch.

And, rightly or not, the private sector, NGOs and parents are looking at the ministry for guidance and policy direction when it comes to supporting the children's cause.

National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman, appearing on a TV3 morning talk show a few days ago, said two Malaysian kids would be participating in the UN special session for children next month.

But three weeks before the special session, it is learnt that the young ambassadors have not been selected.

Consider the initiative of Uganda instead.

Uganda will be taking 15 children from the African continent who will

then stage a small play at next month's UN special session to support the cause of children.

That's some commitment, coming from an African nation which has achieved relatively slower economic progress than us, to the global movement for children.

As Siti Zaharah said recently, many in the country have taken children's issues for granted.

"It is time we all stopped talking and take action to address all the issues concerning children."

Well said. Or was she just kidding?