

# Help fight drug abuse and sex crimes, NGOs told

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PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help the Government formulate strategies to check drug abuse and sex crimes such as incest, sexual harassment and rape that are on the rise.

The Prime Minister also identified militancy and terrorism as criminal activities that needed to be addressed in ensuring national security and stability.

"After listening to the views posed by voluntary and social groups at last year's Budget dialogue, especially on funding support, the Government allocated RM50.8mil to them this year to fund their various activities," he said when addressing NGO leaders and representatives at the third session of the Budget 2003 Dialogue here yesterday.

He said NGOs could play a role in helping check social ills and improve the people's quality of life and well-being.

He said government programmes had improved the people's quality of life and that the quality of life index had risen to 108.4 points in 2000 from 100 points in 1990.

Dr Mahathir said the RM50.8mil allocated this year

had far exceeded the RM32.9mil allocated in 2000.

He also said the global economic downturn last year with the retrenchment of workers, and unemployed graduates were issues that needed attention.

Dr Mahathir said the mismatch between graduate skills and manpower needs of local industries had resulted in a large number of unemployed graduates.

"To overcome this problem, various training and skills programmes by government agencies had been implemented," he said.

He added that RM150mil had been allocated for the training scheme and another RM150mil for the retraining of retrenched workers under last year's Fiscal Stimulus Package.

Dr Mahathir also said the Government was sensitive to the need to improve the quality of life, especially for the less fortunate and those from the low income group.

"The Government has allocated RM35.4bil or 35.2% of the total Budget 2002 for educational, health, housing and community and welfare services programmes," he added.