

PM: Eastcoast lacks active NGOs

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SHAH ALAM: East coast states have the highest number of disadvantaged people but these states do not have enough active non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help the needy.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said most of the NGOs were located in Klang Valley or in the west coast states.

He urged NGOs to play a more active role to assist the

big group of disabled people living in the east coast states, saying they were in desperate need of employment opportunities, medical aid, rehabilitation, counselling and training.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the launching of the first National Economy Conference for the Disabled yesterday, organised by the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) and the Malaysian National Association for the Disabled.

The conference brought

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together different disabled groups to explore economic possibilities for the disabled, foster relationship among the different disabled groups and encourage the disabled to be independent.

He also said there were 163 volunteer bodies registered with the Government and this year alone, the Government provided annual grants to 153 NGOs to help finance their programmes and training for the disabled.

As at the end of 2001, a total of 4,490 disabled persons were

employed in the private sector.

Earlier, in Bandar Baru Nilai near Seremban, Dr Mahathir warned Muslims that they were exposed to a campaign by PAS leaders to confuse and change their perceptions on the true teachings of Islam.

In expressing his concern, Dr Mahathir said the matter needed to be addressed promptly before it reached a stage where the followers became too obsessed with the leaders to a point of no return.

The Prime Minister said that PAS was adopting a stance similar to the now-defunct Al-Arqam movement.

“Although their teachings and strategy are similar where they instil a strong sense of obsession in their followers towards their leaders using whatever means.

“The obsession is such that even though their leaders commit a wrong, the followers can still accept the faults.

“Therefore, the society must play a role. If they want

to support PAS, it is all right but they must reject anything that is inconsistent with the teachings of Islam,” he said after launching the ground-breaking ceremony of the Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia (KUIM) main campus.

On the MTUC proposal to set up a fund to realise the “One Home, One Computer” objective, Dr Mahathir said there was no such need.

He said the people could afford to buy a computer nowadays as it was cheap.