

PM: Women may set pace

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KUALA LUMPUR: 'Women have proven their capability in the workplace and if the current trend continues, they will determine the country's future, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said women, when compared to their male peers, were more hardworking, conscientious, responsible and inclined to seize opportunities given them.

He applauded the fact that while women were now in more positions of power and even able to pilot a fighter jet plane, they should not neglect their role as mothers and educators to their children or else it could lead to social problems.

He said this was a dilemma faced by most fast developing countries and called on women groups to look into the problem.

"We want the women to continue to work as they are significant contributors to the country's economy and the country needs them but we need them to also play a role in raising their children, too," he said at the opening of the Hari Wanita 2002 celebration at the Bukit Jalil stadium here yesterday.

Also present at the function was Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir said teachers now play a bigger role these days as both parents in many families were working.

"Teachers do not just

impart knowledge to students but also have to help shape the character and morality of the students as well as inculcate noble values in them," he said.

Later at a press conference, Dr Mahathir admitted that this could be a big burden for them

to bear but added that the Government was recruiting more teachers.

"We have adequately compensated them. I think the old student-teacher relation that used to exist has to be restored."

He said fathers, too, should help raise their children.

"If they don't, we have to banish them to the kitchen," he said in jest.

Dr Mahathir earlier voiced his concern over the gender imbalance in the local univer-

sities where girls made up almost 70% of the student population.

He said the Government would try to motivate the boys and find out why they are not interested in pursuing higher studies.