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Mahathir-Handicapped

DR MAHATHIR WANTS EMPLOYERS TO GIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO THE HANDICAPPED

SHAH ALAM, Aug 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on everyone particularly employers to understand the potentials of the handicapped group and to be prepared to give more opportunities to them to work in their companies.

The Prime Minister said what was important was that the recruitment of the handicapped group should not be perceived as merely fulfilling a social responsibility.

"For the ordinary people, getting a job was normal but for the handicapped group, it was a very special gift," he said when opening the first National Level Economic Conference for the Handicapped, here.

Dr Mahathir said the handicapped should be given an opportunity to show their potentials while enjoying a more meaningful life without depending on other people.

Indirectly, said Dr Mahathir, the opportunity to work would give them a chance to integrate and mix around as part of society.

As at the end of last year, 4,490 handicapped people succeeded in securing jobs in the private sector, that is, 645 jobs for those with impaired vision, 1,597 for those with impaired hearing, 1,956 for the physically handicapped and 292 for the mentally handicapped people.

Dr Mahathir said in the public sector, the government had so far offered jobs to 446 handicapped people in various posts from the support group to the professional group.

In addition, Dr Mahathir, said the national elite athletes disabled (EAD) had also achieved success at the regional and international levels including at the Commonwealth Games 2002 in Manchester, England recently.

"The successes achieved by this group proved that they can also join the normal people in contributing towards national development and self advancement," he said.

Touching on other matters, Dr Mahathir said parents should not feel ashamed to report cases of abnormalities in their families because one per cent of the total population of any country were made up of handicapped people.

Dr Mahathir also urged more non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to be more active in the east coast states.

He said most NGOs were found to be registered in the Klang Valley and west coast states only while the number of NGOs registered in the east coast was limited.

"The number of handicapped people in the east coast is the highest and they too should be provided with various opportunities, assistance, treatment, rehabilitation, guidance and training," he said.

The four-day conference which ends tomorrow is organised by the Disability Resource Centre and the National Association for the Handicapped.

-- BERNAMA

MAM RIZ RZS AHH AO