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Uphold our family values, urges Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - For the sake of our future generations, Malaysians must uphold their strong and cohesive family values and not blindly emulate negative Western cultures and practices, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the family institution and good values must be preserved and nurtured to act as a shield against the various social ills threatening the society.

"We must be resilient and hold on to our family values, which have been proven to be good for us," he said at the launch of the "Family First - Bring Your Heart Home" campaign at the Women's Affairs and Family Development Ministry here today.

"We must revive the good values that are neglected due to a different living and working environment."

The Prime Minister said although Malaysia was geared towards becoming a developed nation, it did not mean that good family values should be sacrificed.

"We need not follow the Western family values and concepts where a man can marry another man, a woman can marry another woman ...and it is recognised as a family institution.

"We cannot sacrifice our values and ape such behaviour. Even the definition of a family has been changed."

He said when a nation progressed, the family institution could be the first victim because parents would be busy with their career and did not have enough time for their children.

"This results in the children not getting enough attention and guidance."

Such an environment, he said, would eventually lead to various social ills.

He said children who grow up in such negative family environment often lacked love and discipline.

"This is why there are social problems (such as) truancy, violence in schools, drug abuse and even crimes."

Urging parents to spend more time with their children, he said social problems were widespread in the urban society.

"In the kampungs, there is not much of a social problem. When rural folks migrate to towns, it's quite difficult to pursue a normal family life."

He added that extended family should also be given attention as it formed the framework for society.

"We want to be a developed nation by the year 2020, but we want to be developed in our very own mould and based on our very own value system."

Also present at the launch were Dr Mahathir's wife, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and wife, Datin Seri Endon Mahmood, Women's Affairs and Family Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and other Ministers.

The "Family First - Bring Your Heart Home" campaign is part of the 2002 National Family Day celebrations and emphasises a comprehensive approach for the development of a happy and healthy family institution.