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PM: Greater interaction among people vital

PUTRAJAYA, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for greater interaction among people from the developed and developing world so that they could understand each other and correct negative perceptions created by the international media.

"To get to know each other better, we have to personally meet people rather than to rely on news reports. If you rely entirely on the media, you're going to be misinformed and perhaps today there is more misinformation than information in the media."

Speaking to scouts and guides from the United Kingdom who called on him at his department today, Dr Mahathir said international movements such as the scouts could play their role more effectively by understanding others better.

The scouts, aged between 14 and 17, are the first group among 800 scouts from the UK to visit Malaysia after attending the 20th World Scouts Jamboree in Thailand at the end of last year.

Present were Malaysia's Chief Scout Tan Sri Dr Sulaiman Daud, Chief Commissioner of Scouts Datuk Hamidin Abdullah and British High Commissioner Bruce Cleghorn.

"I'm glad you are here and can see for yourself that Malaysia is peaceful. I'm quite sure a lot of people believe Malaysia is not safe, that there are terrorists around and bombs are going to explode at anytime."

He added that this was merely a perception fed by the media that the whole South East Asia was unsafe.

At a dialogue later, Dr Mahathir was asked what Malaysia and the UK could do to contribute towards world peace.

The Prime Minister responded by saying that the people of the two nations could be critical of those who want to solve problems through wars, as wars had never solved problems.

"If you don't believe me, you should study the history of defeated nations. Japan and Germany were defeated. Today Japan has become the second biggest economy in the world while Germany is a leading country in Europe. What did they gain from war? Nothing."