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Poverty, Primary Factor For Child Marriage

MELAKA, May 20 (Bernama) -- The prevalence of child marriage is primarily attributed to extreme poverty in poor countries, said World Youth Foundation chairman Tan Sri Mohd Ali Rustam.

He said poor parents in such countries assumed they were reducing their burden when they married off their children but they were unaware of the ordeals their children had to suffer.

"After the marriage, children were sold and beaten by their husbands who were also poor, so the problem will not end if poverty is not eradicated first," he told reporters here Friday.

Earlier he opened the foundation's four-day 'International Conference on Child Marriage' which was attended by about 80 participants representing 22 countries including Kenya, Bangladesh, India, Singapore and Malaysia.

Mohd Ali said apart from poverty, the level of education was another factor which caused child marriage as the lack of education made an individual to be influenced by the surroundings and was unable to evaluate between good and bad.

He said the people especially in poor countries with low level of education should therefore build more schools to overcome the problem.

In this regard, Mohd Ali urged all parties to work together to eradicate child marriage.

He said child marriage was a dangerous practice which threatened the lives and future of young girls throughout the world.

"Child marriage violates the human rights of children which we should be protecting," he said.

He said based on a report of a non-governmental organisation, Girls Not Bride, almost half of the girls in South Asia got married below 18 years old and every year, 15 million girls were married before reaching age 18.

The World Youth Foundation was established in 1994 as an international non-governmental organisation with consultative status of the United Nations Economic and Social Council to promote research, development and documentation programmes on youths worldwide.

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