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Let's go back to basics in tackling today's social ills

Sharifah Zuriah Aljeffri

I SUPPORT Kamariah Mohamed's views and comments on the recent discussion on how to solve the social ills affecting our youths today (NST, March 21). Her comments are sensible and practical and those involved in trying to create solutions to the problems faced by our children should rethink carefully before implementing any new programme.

It is amazing to note that every time Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad sneezes, the entire nation goes into a frenzy. Take, for example, the recent concern expressed by Dr Mahathir about the social ills pervading our youths. Various groups and individuals came forward with one suggestion after another. They are, in fact, creating more problems by coming up with fancy names such as Briged Putra, Briged Putri and National Social Service. Are we going to be dictatorial by forcing the youths to join by making it compulsory? Are we teaching the youths to think for themselves or are we creating robots? And where is the money coming from to fund these organisations?

Often we hear that the Government has no fund to improve the conditions in schools or it cannot spare another sen to expand the activities of the various existing youth organisations. Isn't it an irony that we do not have more money to give to the present youth organisations and yet we can come up with RM500 million a year for a National Social Service?

Malaysians have short memory. In 1993, the Malaysia Crime Prevention Foundation, Ministry of Education, Welfare Department and the police jointly organised a three-day seminar on Juvenile Delinquency. Topics discussed ranged from "Juvenile Delinquencies: Trends, Problems and Causes" to "Parental Role and Responsibilities".

And in 1994, the National Council of Women's Organisations and The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung organised a conference on "Educating Youth For Positive Roles Towards 21st Century".

I am sure resolutions were passed with specific follow-up actions. But what have happened to these resolutions? They must be collecting dust in somebody's office.

Let us not come up with grandiose schemes. Let us go back to the basics and improve the existing programmes that we have for youths. Let us not confuse the youths with more high-sounding programmes.

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