

10/02/1997

Moral degradation: Understand the principal causes

Lee Lam Thye

BOTH Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, have spoken intensively on the subject of social ills afflicting youth.

Besides a Cabinet committee on social ills headed by Anwar, Dr Mahathir has also directed the Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers to pay more attention to addressing the problem in their respective States. All local authorities have also been issued similar directives.

Recently, the Government imposed a 1 a.m. limit on entertainment and nightspot operation hours in the hope of eradicating deviant activities involving youth. There is also a proposal to introduce non-military national service.

According to reports, the police have identified several entertainment centres in the Klang Valley which are involved in the distribution of Ecstasy pills, an addictive drug popular among the affluent youth.

Police raids at these outlets have shown conclusively that the drug is being taken by teenagers.

I agree with law-abiding entertainment operators that it is not fair to associate them with anti-social activities.

This is why I have suggested they lend their support to the Government's stand against dadah abuse and initiate anti-dadah campaigns at their premises as proof of their commitment.

But I disagree that the 1 a.m. ruling is going to drive away foreign tourists. It is illogical to state that tourists visit KL because of its nightspots and entertainment outlets.

However, curbing the availability of dadah at the nightspots is inadequate to solve the social problems at hand. We need to look into the entire issue of moral degradation in society. We have to examine the root causes of our social problems.

We need to understand what makes our youth take drugs, what causes them to alienate themselves from their families, and why they frequent nightspots.

A special body made up of academicians, the police, social workers and other concerned groups is needed to carry out an in-depth study into the root causes and offer viable solutions.

The findings of such a study should be made public and recommendations forwarded to the Government.

What is most fundamental is to revert to basics and strengthen the family institution.

Moral decay is caused by the erosion of good values which can only be overcome by upgrading the quality of life with emphasis on discipline and rectitude.

Parents must be increasingly concerned about the quality of family life and constantly take steps to impart in their children the basic moral and religious values needed to build the foundation of a strong and stable society.

(END)