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Moral decay

ALL of us know that youths are easily fired by the spirit of idealism and a sense of adventure, although sometimes to the point of being reckless. But that is the nature of youths and perhaps even a necessary phase of growing up provided they grow out of it and they do not exhibit lasting damage.

However, if youths are attracted and lured into a world that dabbles in the bizarre and which could expose them to bodily and spiritual dangers, then it is youthful idealism gone seriously wrong and we must bring them back to their senses. The latest disclosure of the existence of a black metal culture is testimony to how easily alienated and misguided youths without strong core values can be inducted into a movement that differs from the norms of society. The black metal culture and other similar cult-like activities are extreme manifestations of a growing problem of moral degradation that has caused increasing concern among the country's leaders, community elders and religious people.

None other than the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself has expressed his deep consternation over the problems of moral degradation and crime among youths. The Prime Minister has gone one step further to urge everyone concerned, especially parents and teachers, to find out the causes and to seek ways to immediately correct the situation.

The tendency for various sections of society to indulge in finger pointing and to blame each other should be avoided if we are to find lasting solutions to the problems. Most of us would have to share part of the blame for what has become of our young. Some parents of the troubled youths should be blamed because they are too busy working to line their pockets and have little time for their children. The lack of parental supervision will leave their children with plenty of time on their hands. Their immature minds can easily be influenced by bad hats, the underground and the dregs of society.

Whether they are male or female, the young can be led astray into experiments with drugs and sex as well as joining criminal gangs or cult groups. What is worse is if they also have easy access to cheap pornography and hang out at illegal video centres. If they come from broken and poor families, and are constantly short of pocket money, they can be tempted into committing crime. If they study in schools which impose strict discipline and have good and dedicated principals and teachers who really care for them, the youths who are neglected at home may be able to find a sense of belonging and develop self-esteem. But discipline in secondary schools today has generally deteriorated compared to previously and this has contributed to the moral decay. The more liberal society that we are now living in together with the easy accessibility to information and Western entertainment through TVs and the Internet means that youths are subject to diverse influences, some of which are to their detriment.

The statistics on crimes committed by students from 1999 to May this year, which included 12 cases of causing deaths and 123 rapes, reflect the urgency of the situation that is crying out for solution. If we do not do something fast and effective to resolve the problems of crime and moral decay among youth, this number could increase in future.

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