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Parents largely to blame for ills

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IT is disturbing to note the deep concern and frustrations expressed by our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad over moral degradation and crime among our youths (NST, July 21).

Their immoral and degrading activities need to be addressed forthwith and solutions found to stop them from the downhill path to perdition.

The country today is plagued with myriad social ills like gang rape by university students, incest, brutal murder, crimes, dadah addiction, robbery, domestic violence, teenage sex, unwed mothers, child abuse, wife battering, suicides, divorces, mental breakdown, juvenile delinquency, promiscuity, lepak, runaways and the list goes on.

All these lead to the decay of the moral and social fabric of our society.

As if these are not enough, now we have yet another problem - youths practising a Black Metal cult involved in anti-religious and anti-establishment activities.

We have fathers raping their daughters. Such tragedies were unheard of in the good old days. This most heinous crime has now become a common occurrence. It is at moments of such agony that one recalls the melancholic thoughts of Shakespeare: "O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts, And men have lost their reason..." (Mark Antony in Julius Caesar).

As the Prime Minister asks - where have we gone wrong? Some intense soul searching is needed and remedial measures put in place before the situation deteriorates. Every member of society has a role to play to curb this unhealthy and dangerous trend.

Is this the price we pay for civilisation? British philosopher Bertrand Russell once wrote: "An increase in civilisation has been correlated with a decrease in religiosity."

A worldwide survey carried out in 1976 by the Gallup International Research Institute revealed that in countries where a large percentage of the population are poverty stricken, the people believe in God and practise religion whereas most of those from affluent societies in developed countries do not believe in God or pray.

Right religious teachings and guidance are vital to lead a complete and harmonious life.

It is a paradox that as a nation progresses, its human values decline. Whatever may be the cause, we have to eliminate the culture of extremism and put our youths on the right track through aggressive and concerted campaigning.

We want them to become conscientious and diligent citizens to achieve the Vision 2020 goal. For this, we need the co-operation and support of teachers, religious leaders, elected representatives, community elders, non-governmental organisations and, most of all, parents.

I hold parents largely responsible for the current unsatisfactory state of affairs. Most of the parents are too busy pursuing material wealth, position and power that they have little or no time for their children.

As children are under their care most of the time, it is the sacred duty of parents to inculcate moral and spiritual values in them.

Most of the delinquents come from affluent homes with no parental control.

They rope in poor children from less salubrious surroundings, exposing them to crime and depravity, thereby bringing discredit to their parents,

their schools and endless problems to the authorities.

The government agencies have to be tough with these incorrigible youths and the courts should impose deterrent sentences upon conviction.

Our youths must be made to realise that rectitude and devotion in a person are signs of divine grace and responsible youths are the pride and glory of a nation.