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Youths are our greatest asset and hope

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YOUR sports writer Fauzi Omar once described Tiger Woods as a tree, a young tree at that. It was an apt description and analogy of the young man and his potential. As I think of Malaysian youths, I also think of them as trees.

Our youths are our greatest asset. In them lies the future of this nation. And as Malaysia plays an increasingly larger role in this global village, which we once called the world, our youths will also play a larger role in the global arena.

Our young "trees" are the future of this nation. They are the young trees that will "re-forest" the older "rainforest" once depleted.

As such, these young "seedlings" must be properly nurtured in the nursery of life. They cannot just be left to the elements, stranded on some metaphorical "Blue Lagoon" to find out the facts of life to their detriment and left to fend for themselves. Nay! Our best assets must be given the best nurseries.

This is why the recent ban on video arcades has sent such an affirmative signal to our youths. Are they hearing it? The ban is good not only because it will help control the gambling habit, which in itself is a wasting disease.

The message that the youth of Malaysia must hear is that they are our most precious assets. I am careful not to use the word commodity. All over the world, youth are being exploited for many things. They are pushed into drugs, Ecstasy, and pornography. They are the markets that Hollywood exploits.

The youth of today is being treated as both a commodity and a powerful market force. Trends in Hollywood suggest that this is the target audience and hence movies are produced without any thought or consideration of their detrimental effects on these young lives. Trade rules the day.

These youths who are exploited by pornographers, film producers, the advertising world, fashion and music industry, not forgetting the drug and sex industries, use them both as a commodity, a raw material to be exploited and also as the market for their finished products.

This is not too different from the days of colonialism where the raw materials were extracted from the occupied countries, manufactured and then re-sold to the natives. It is exploitation at its worst.

So our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's recent warning about the negative cultural influences on our youth is timely. The message is "You are too precious to waste your life away". How many of our youth ever hear this message of affirmation? How many are actually educated to believe that they are precious? Their lives carry tremendous potential for good.

They are not meant to be lost to drugs, Ecstasy, AIDS, pornography, moronic video games ad infinitum. Neither are they to succumb to the rubbish that is broadcast through Channel V and MTV. I took the time to watch these two channels recently just to observe what our youths are being fed with.

I was very disturbed to see almost every music video filled with brazen sexuality, near nudity, strong sexual innuendo and other counter-culture elements. What are we feeding them with? With this staple diet broadcasts 24 hours daily, do we expect our youth to know or behave any differently?

The MTV V-jays all portray the same cloned style of dressing and

speaking. There is not much to commend this drab lack of individualism. There is a sterility that is strongly camouflaged by the attractive presentation.

And if we continue to ignore the open sale of pirated VCDs in our shopping malls, we are going to reap some terrible fruits. First, we are saying it is okay to lie, cheat and steal for in essence that is what this piracy is all about.

Secondly, we are allowing very negative influences from Hollywood to corrupt our youths. Almost every film coming out of Hollywood in the last few years is filled with violence, every form of illicit sex, nudity and profanity.

These films are sold openly and one wonders why the law enforcement appears impotent in curbing it.

It's not like one has to detect a hidden location. It's done in broad daylight. Go to any shopping mall on any day, and arrests can be made for piracy, renting out space for illegal trade and selling of uncensored films.

Taking the same strong-arm tactics that were used in shutting down video arcades with results that were both swift and startling appears the only way forward and the relevant authorities must act now. If this is not done soon it will in the long-term seriously affect our "re-afforestation" policy.

Malaysian youths need to hear this message loud and clear. You are precious. You are valuable. You have destiny that will affect future generations to come. Your body is not to be demeaned through drugs. Your head is not to be bobbed and banged as you waste away on the dance floor.

Your sexuality is not to be exploited by and for people who are unscrupulous in their desire for money. And there may be truth in recent newspaper reports that this is all a conspiracy by a foreign power to destroy Malaysia and what better way than to enter our unguarded "nurseries" and destroy our precious "seedlings"?

You youths are our hope, our future and our destiny. You are precious and valuable, not as a commodity to be exploited or even a market force to be made rich from.

You are a tree meant to bless and benefit others for good. You are the future forests of this nation - our lungs and covering. We love you! That's the message. Read the signals correctly now.