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Care for our children to build strong family institution and nation

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently called on Malaysians to make greater efforts to defend and preserve family values for the sake of their future generations.

He said that the family institution and good values must be preserved and nurtured to act as a shield against the social ills plaguing society.

Dr Mahathir's call is not without justification. His concern that when a nation progresses the family institution could be the first victim with children not getting enough attention and guidance, is indeed a wake-up call to all Malaysians to pay more serious attention to family life and caring for their children.

A dilemma faced by Malaysian parents today is how to strike a balance between their careers and nurturing their children, a task made more complicated by demanding employers who make their staff stay back late to get the work finished.

Another problem is also perhaps due to the lack of parenting skills which has to be addressed.

The fact is parents are busy with their careers and are not able to spend quality time with their children, resulting in thousands of urban children being left to foreign maids, babysitters and relatives.

Children who return from schools find themselves in empty homes as their parents are at work. There is no one around to show parental love, and teach and inculcate in the children good family values.

Instead of seeking guidance from parents, these children do so from their peers. With negative peer pressure, an environment will exist which will eventually lead to various social ills.

Children who grow up in such an environment will end up becoming the victims of social ills such as truancy, violence in schools, dadah abuse and even crimes.

If this problem is not addressed, it will result in a serious divide between children and parents and an increase in social problems and crimes involving young people.

Parents must be prepared to make an effort to spend time with their children. Children need parental love for without it their lives will be destroyed as they will neither understand nor appreciate love and family ties later in their lives.

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

What is also needed is a continuous programme of moral strengthening and reinforcement to make the children aware of their responsibilities to themselves, their parents, the community and the nation.

The world today is confronted with a very disturbing phenomenon. Wherever modernisation and economic development take place and results in a better standard of living, new problems, such as a decline in human values and moral degradation, occur.

To arrest the situation, a massive programme of inculcating values is required at all levels for children and youths.

Values such as obedience, filial piety, respect for elders, patience and tolerance, truth, responsibility, honour, etc, need not be taught only in classrooms.

It can also be done through music, songs and drama to make these

children think about human values and their importance.

Strong human values along with strong families are keys to building a peaceful and stable community which will lead to a strong and stable nation. The need for these has never been greater than today.