

31/05/2003

Clamping down on VCD vices

IT should be seen as more than a moral crusade. The nationwide crackdown on the distribution of pirated and pornographic video compact discs (VCDs) as well as illegal gaming machines, as directed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, must be tough enough to eliminate these vices at their roots.

In all such illicit activities, the villain is rarely alone. The authorities must include the syndicate and its network of distributors, sellers and regular buyers. The possibility of some enforcement officers sheltering the syndicate's activities should not be discounted. There are instances of operations being botched. Plainly, there is a need for intelligence work that will enable the police to penetrate the syndicates and nab their masterminds and uniform-clad and badge-carrying "protectors".

The time-frame of two weeks is a challenge to produce results. But given the right strategy and deployment of sufficient resources, it is not an impossible mission. Failure to keep the deadline will affect the credibility of the police. This is how it should be. For too long, there has been a disproportionate lack of focus on purging the nation of vices such as pornography and illegal gaming. It is not a question of morality. This under-enforcement of the laws or toleration of the so-called "benign vices" have helped to weaken the social fabric.

Pornography contributes to the climate that breeds societal ills and sexual crimes. The authorities must remove the blinkers and acknowledge the danger in the porn films' portrayal of females as objects to be used, abused and discarded. Nothing in the name of erotic freedom legitimises the degradation of women in this way.

Crime, no matter how small, enfeebles the social structure and an enfeebled structure produces more crime, which destroys both national security and prosperity. As seen elsewhere, this self-reinforcing dynamic constitutes one of the largest impediments to a nation's economic and social growth.

Plainly, more is at stake than the credibility of the police. In crime-busting, there can be no room for failure.