

Soldiers far more safer than NS trainees
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The death of yet another National Service trainee was reported in the newspapers not too long ago but with all the political razzmatazz going on, few had noticed or paid much attention to it. Perhaps, deaths amongst National Service trainees have become stale reading as compared to news that is more intriguing and scandalous involving politics and politicians.

Five objectives of the National Service Programme (as stated on their website) are (please excuse any translation errors):

- * To enhance patriotism amongst the younger generation;
- * To foster national integration and enhance racial ties;
- * To develop positive traits through accepted values;
- * To promote volunteerism; and
- * To produce vibrant, aggressive and confident youths.

All of the above are good and noble objectives but is the National Service Programme achieving them? I strongly believe that the answer is resounding 'no'. To achieve these objectives, it is best to start from the beginning ie, while the children are still in primary school.

Sending them for a three-month programme during their late teens will achieve nothing. You cannot shove these attributes; traits or what have you down their throats and expect them to change overnight. It would take nothing short of a miracle for this to happen.

The modules should be revised and restructured and conducted at the primary school level. The funds and allocations should be re-directed to the Education Ministry and disbursed to the schools for them to run these programmes. There is a Malay proverb that says 'melentur aur biarlah waktu rebung'. To the people responsible for the National Service Programme, take heed of this age old advice. There is much wisdom in it. Do not look for shortcuts to success, there are none. Remember, 'Rome was not built in one day'.

Much has been said as to why certain quarters are insistent on the continuity of the National Service Programme and that these people have immensely benefitted (financially) from it. However, I am here to neither dwell nor debate on this but to appeal to them to consider scrapping the National Service programme and substituting it with similar structured programmes for the primary school and have these programmes continue up to university.

In between, we have about 15 to 16 years to achieve these objectives instead of just three months. 'Sedikit-sedikit, lama-lama menjadi bukit'. Think about this.

Ponder on the following statement whilst you think about what I have said above - our men in uniform sent overseas to hot spots on peace keeping missions are safer than our children sent to the National Service Programme. Fact or fiction? You decide.

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