

## **Family first line of defence in war on drugs**

IT is becoming increasingly evident that the family has a crucial role to play in the fight against drug abuse. It is the first and foremost defence against the many social maladies which confront our nation today.

The power and potential of the family in the fight against drug abuse is much greater and more meaningful than the might of all the enforcement agencies we can muster.

While law enforcement is essential, more important is our ability to deny our homes and communities access to drugs.

Like most families the world over, families in Malaysia are constantly being confronted with the serious and growing problem of drug abuse among children and youths, leading to crime and violence.

The devastating effects of drug abuse on the family presents the most potent threat to society.

We must not allow the family, which is the basic and most revered unit of our communities, to disintegrate and fall apart from drug abuse.

It would not only be a tragedy but also a catastrophe for parents to see their children slowly and painfully destroy themselves through drug abuse.

Families must, therefore, be made strong to resist succumbing to the drug menace. We need to further strengthen family ties, and restore and renew the traditional values of obedience to parents, and caring and sharing among family members.

Families need to play a more effective role in the aftercare of drug addicts through strengthening and organising self-help groups.

Parents must be interested and involved during the treatment and rehabilitation of drug-addicted children and play a part in ensuring the success of the rehabilitation programme.

While we emphasise the crucial role of the family, responsibility for eradicating the drug problem in our societies rests equally on the shoulders of the public and private sector as well as our respective communities.

Government efforts to tackle and overcome the drug menace will not achieve its goal without the fullest cooperation and undivided support of NGOs, the private sector, parents and concerned individuals.

I believe the answer lies in embarking on more drug abuse prevention programmes involving families.

The time has come for the Government to review the effectiveness of our anti-drug efforts and take steps to strengthen our respective government agencies to deal with this massive problem.

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