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Police force needs to get back on track

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NO amount of expression of regrets and condemnation can sufficiently capture our sense of abhorrence with the admission by the former Inspector-General of Police that he had slapped the former Deputy Prime Minister while the latter was in police custody.

Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor told the Royal Commission of Inquiry investigating Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's injuries that he slapped the former Deputy Prime Minister after the latter allegedly uttered the words "Ni bapa anjing" (this is the father of the dogs).

But former Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman, who led the commission's investigation, concluded that Rahim was not provoked and that the attack was calculated.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, reacting to Rahim's admission, said he was disappointed that the former IGP was involved in assaulting Anwar.

Dr Mahathir, who ordered the formation of the commission after Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah expressed dissatisfaction with the police investigation into the case, said the due process of the law would take its course, adding that Mohtar would decide on the action.

For now, apart from repeating the general feelings of the public that such a detestable incident should not have happened, especially when it involved two of the nation's prominent citizens, there is little that we can say without jeopardising the due process of the law.

But in addressing this very difficult and unusual issue, our focus must go beyond the punishment that Rahim should get for his action.

What is even more important is the scrutiny of the whole police force, its methods of operation and the rehabilitation of its image.

Here we are not talking about individuals in the force, their actions and behaviour. We are talking about the future of the country's number one law and order agency.

If our police force, which had for decades served us well and won the admiration of the world, had gone bad, we must be brave enough to admit it and take steps to put it back on track.

We cannot allow the tens of thousands of our law-abiding, dedicated and incorruptible policemen of all ranks to be viewed with suspicion as a result of the action of the black sheep in the agency.

Any suspicion that our policemen are less than clean and trustworthy will render the work of the agency ineffective.