

23 MAR 2000

Abdullah-Police

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By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, March 23 (Bernama) -- For almost 200 years, Malaysia's police force fought many battles against robbers, rapists, murderers and even Communists and now, they are battling a "war" to redeem their fallen image.

The "black eye" of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the young doctor shot dead by a policeman and the unexplained deaths in police lock-ups were some of the latest cases that have cast doubts on the integrity and image of the Royal Malaysian Police as it turns 193 on Saturday.

But Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi wants the police force to "maintain their image at the highest level".

"The police must show that they are a credible force and be conscious of the fact that they have a duty to perform," Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said in an interview here in conjunction with Police Day.

Despite allegations of serious wrong-doings even from as high a person as the previous Inspector-General of Police, let alone some lowly constables, Abdullah said that overall, the police have been doing a "good job".

"We are certainly happy with the performance of our police force," he said.

In fact, he said, in their various speeches, including in Parliament, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the government expressed appreciation for the invaluable service the police had rendered.

The force had never condoned errant personnel and had acted promptly against those involved in recent incidents of conduct unbecoming of law-enforcers, he said.

"They have been charged in court to face the law," he said.

Abdullah appealed to the public to continue to accord the police the respect the force deserved in upholding an honourable profession.

As for police personnel, Abdullah said they would also have to earn the people's respect by discharging their duties with integrity.

The police became the talk of the town, as well as internationally, when then Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor confessed last year before a Royal Commission of Inquiry to assaulting Anwar, the country's former deputy prime minister, while in police custody.

That "black eye" episode ended with Rahim being sentenced to two months jail on March 15. Rahim is appealing against the sentence.

Also, public perception of "trigger-happy" cops was reinforced by an incident last year in which a policeman shot dead a doctor who was in a parked car with his girl friend.

During the hour-long interview, Abdullah also spoke of the need to modernise the force with the latest anti-crime technology, among other things, besides upgrading the quality of personnel and set-up.

Abdullah said for the police to get the cream of the crop, the government may have to review the entry qualifications for officers and men in future recruitment.

The police would also have to keep themselves abreast with the latest in information technology (IT) since "the criminals are also increasingly IT-literate," he said.

The government would provide extensive opportunities for police officers and men to attend IT courses locally and abroad, he said.

"We want our officers to be really able and sophisticated," added Abdullah.

-- BERNAMA

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