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Touched by royal presence at function

By Datuk Mohd Zaman Khan

I WANT to congratulate the Taiping Prison and the Prisons Department as a whole for their 125th anniversary celebrations on Feb 1.

I wish also to congratulate the Raja Muda Perak Raja Dr Nazrin Ibni Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah for officiating at the celebration.

I write with a feeling of sadness and high appreciation for the Raja Muda for agreeing to lend his royal status to the celebrations.

As we all know, our community looks with scorn and prejudice at the prisons. It is a place where bad people are incarcerated. Ex-convicts are looked down on to the extent that families reject them and society would think twice before offering them jobs to earn an honest living.

During my tenure at the Prisons Department on secondment, the modern Sungai Buloh Prison was completed and occupied.

I approached the Home Affairs Ministry to seek permission to invite the then Prime Minister, Datuk Seri (now Tun) Dr Mahathir Mohamad to officiate at the opening ceremony.

My suggestion was cold-shouldered and I heard unkind and hurtful remarks.

To them, it was unworthy to get people of such high position to be associated with the prisons.

They may not realise that the response was completely negative and unkind not only to me and the rest of the prison personnel but also to the prisoners and their families.

A prison is a place of rehabilitation. Inmates should be given a second chance.

Soon after my retirement, the Kajang Female Prison was graced with a visit by Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Ali. I was thrilled and excited.

I wrote to the director-general of Prisons to propose the authorities get her consent to name the Kajang Female Prison after her. There is nothing to be ashamed of in lending our good name to a prison.

Juvenile delinquents are placed in a borstal named after Sir Henry Gurney, the former British High Commissioner who was assassinated in an ambush on the road to Fraser's Hill.

There is still the borstal for female juvenile delinquents at Batu Gajah to be named.

We should name it after a prominent lady, maybe even Tun Fatimah.

To the Raja Muda Perak, I wish to say thank you.

DATUK MOHD ZAMAN KHAN

Ampang

(END) Source : New Straits Times