

Gerakan: Coroner's Court senseless without IPCMC
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The latest suggestions to set up a coroner's court and a centralised lock up to combat custodial death incidences is "senseless" if there is no oversight body to keep the police in check, said Gerakan.

Gerakan vice president A Kohilan Pillay said as such the implementation of the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC) was fundamental.

"It makes no sense if the government decided to only establish a coroner's court and a centralised lock up devoid of the IPCMC.

He said the rate of custodial deaths "seems to be increasing and I find it alarming".

"Ignoring calls for greater oversight will only aggravate the situation," he said in a statement today.

Kohilan said even though the police have the power to apprehend a suspect, it does not extend to abusing the suspect or using force or coercion to elicit a confession from the suspect.

He added that the existence of the IPCMC could help restore the public's confidence in the police force.

Kohilan's call is echoed by other critics of the new move as not addressing the core issue, and both measures would not be effective without the IPCMC in place.

"We wish to state that the issue is not about the centralised lockup, investigation rooms or CCTVs.

"It is about accountability and taking actions on those who breach the lock up rules, abuse power and brutalise suspects," said PKR head of legal and human rights bureau Latheefa Koya.

Stop State Violence Movement, a coalition of 29 NGOs, said that the coroner's court would still be weak without the IPCMC as it still entails the police investigating their own personnel.

Following the rising number of custodial deaths in just the first half of the year with three occurring within a span of weeks, many groups have revived calls for the IPCMC, which was recommended by a Royal Commission of Inquiry in 2005.

However the government has dodged the call by saying there was already the Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission (EAIC) that, although criticised as watered-down, could be improved by giving it prosecution powers.

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