

Remove IGP to regain confidence in police

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By Jay Jay Denis

COMMENT This month alone, at least 103 people have been arrested by Malaysian police for reasons from apparently being seditious to disrupting public peace through peaceful assemblies.

The bulk of these arrests, about 80 people, took place after the gathering at the Customs Department in Kelana Jaya on Monday. I was one of the 80 who were detained at Kelana Jaya police station.

Our aim was to get questions relating to the goods and services tax (GST) answered, as many Malaysians are still not prepared to face the consequences. Many will lose their lives if they cannot foot the bill beginning next month.

Shockingly, as the central agency involved in this process, the Royal Customs and Excise Department is ill-prepared as well.

It is then inexplicable to me why the police had to get involved on Monday. Some even tried to coerce people into leaving the compound before 5pm that day.

A woman police officer told an elderly woman in front of me, "Aunty, lebih baik balik ke rumah dan makan. Dari pagi tak makan, nanti pengsan." Her reply was worth its weight in gold. She said, "Puan, saya pengsan tak makan tak apa. Itu GST mari minggu depan, saya mungkin mati."

These people are my heroes.

However, the actions of late of the Malaysian police have caused many people, including myself, to lose respect for the institution which has a duty to safeguard the public, making Malaysia a home for all.

Actions by the police are providing an impression that they are in place to safeguard the government and come down harshly on any person who points out wrongdoings.

Police have a different goal in mind

The police in Malaysia, led by Khalid Abu Bakar, appear to have a different goal in mind, which is to provide a safe environment for Umno and Barisan Nasional to rule, and claw back on any dissent that calls on the government to correct its failed policies.

If the police indeed are for the people, they should have instead tried to facilitate an agreement between the Customs Department and people gathered so that concerns raised could have been addressed. The police, who had no business being on that compound,

stymied the process of negotiation.

We came in peace, they came with force.

We came prepared with a list of 106 questions, they came armed with batons and shields.

We came with a mission to get our questions on GST answered, but their mission was to stop us from doing that.

With such displays of arrogance and disregard for the law, the police stand to lose legitimacy as the bastions of public safety because it is the people of Malaysia who provide the police with that legitimacy to enforce laws.

To compound matters, lawyers were denied entrance to meet with the detainees, food and water was not provided - which are clear violations of non-negotiable human rights.

Signs are showing that police are now perfectly willing to go beyond the law to cut out any pressure against the ruling elite and its agencies. The men in blue must be firmly admonished for this.

In the immediate, what the people need is to regain trust in the police force, and under the current Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar, there isn't a cat in hell's chance of that happening.

So, to prevent things going overboard, it is essential that the IGP is removed immediately by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, and for a person of reason to be installed as police chief. The police need to go back to the basics of policing.

Room must be allowed for a democratic discourse, without threats, if Malaysia is not run by a quasi-dictatorship.

The current IGP seems to want to instil fear in people. I am confident that Malaysians will stand together and not be cowed.

The voice of the people will triumph.

JAY JAY DENIS is one of the 80 people arrested during the anti-GST sit-in in Kelana Jaya.