

# Give time for police to meet challenges

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THERE is deep anger among the rank and file of the police.

Understandably so. It has been a torrid year for the police force. Nothing seems to be going right.

The Royal Commission on the Police had quite a few scathing comments about their work, attitude and culture. Then came the uproar over the nude ear squat and, lately, the ruckus over the 11 mahjong kakis turned baldies at the Kajang police station.

In between, the police had to endure a constant stream of criticism about their work, attitude and corruption. Many in the force feel that they have been singled out unfairly, or too harshly, for criticism.

But why is the police coming under so much scrutiny these days?

Personally, I don't think the force is very much more corrupt, inept or insensitive than it was, say, 10 or 15 years ago. But the world and Malaysia have changed and it appears to me that the police are having difficulty adjusting to the higher expectations of the times.

All over the world, citizens are demanding (and in most cases getting) greater transparency, accountability and governance from governments, corporations and individuals in authority and power.

And citizens around the world, now better educated and more articulate, are being aided by new communication tools - namely, the Internet and mobile phones - that allow them to reach an audience unreachable in the past, at speeds unheard of in the past.

In the age of the Internet and globalisation, the individual is empowered at the expense of big governments and corporations. This trend is irreversible.

Individuals are no longer quietly taking what they considered to be excesses or arbitrariness from authority. If they feel they have been treated unfairly, these aggrieved individuals will protest and the new communication tools allow their grievances to be broadcast and amplified nationwide, even worldwide.

The authorities have to get used to this development and raise their performance bar.

I would classify critics of the Malaysian police under three categories. First, there are those who are genuinely aggrieved at the treatment meted out by the police.

The second group are those who feel the current police practices and behaviour are either outdated or unacceptable and are pushing for change.



COMMENT

By WONG SULONG

Finally, there is a group that, for personal, political or whatever reasons, wants to denigrate the police and make the force feel demoralised.

The third group is dangerous, and the first two groups and Malaysians in general must not allow these nefarious people to undermine the credibility of a fine Malaysian institution that is the Royal Malaysian Police, or PDRM, the abbreviation in Malay.

Like many Malaysians, I believe there are rotten apples among the police, as there are in other institutions and organisations. And I believe the police have a lot to do to improve their service and image.

The PDRM is nearly 200 years old and during that time it had served the country well. Many of its members had sacrificed their lives to defend the country so that Malaysians can live in peace and carry out their business.

The success of the Malaysian economy depends a great deal on stability, and the police had played a vital role in ensuring this stability. We often take this for granted, but look around and see how fragile the peace can be in many other parts of the world. Malaysia is still one of

the safest places to live in, thanks to the police.

The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, is determined to push through changes to make the police an effective, credible and non-corrupt force for the 21st century. To do this takes a lot of political will and support from the force.

The top police brass appreciate and support the Prime Minister's efforts and welcome the recommendations of the Royal Commission if some modifications can be made which, from the police viewpoint, would allow the police to do the job required of them.

The starting point for change must come from the police themselves. They must change their mindset.

At the same time, the force must be given the necessary resources - in terms of personnel and equipment. It is unreasonable to expect the police to change overnight - no organisation of its size and complexity can.



Abdullah: Determined to make the police an effective, credible and non-corrupt force