

Certificates would be better

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THERE have been misgivings about the broom awards given by Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo to under-performing local authorities.

The award should be regarded as a punitive measure to motivate local authorities, government departments and state agencies to become more efficient and effective in undertaking their duties as the third tier of government.

This is the level of government most people deal with and the image of the federal and state governments depends on this interaction and feedback.

Additionally, one reads about international awards such as the selection for the worst-dressed men and women (usually high-profile personalities), and the broom award should be viewed in such light.

The fact that a broom was given speaks volumes about the need to reform and upgrade state agencies and local authorities which have become lethargic, too bureaucratic and ratepayer-unfriendly, as seen by the number of complaints made by residents, non-governmental organisations, residents' associations and politicians.

Hence, Dr Khir had to take drastic steps to shore up the councils and shame them into discarding their apathy. Now that government servants have had a big pay hike, the government expects nothing short of high productivity, dedication and good work ethics from them.

Given the increasing expectations of the people and the government, it is not possible any more to sweep problems under the carpet.

Possibly, Dr Khir could, instead of handing over brooms to the officials, have given them a symbolic "broom award certificate". This may look less negative but the shame is the same.

However, it would be better if all departments and local authorities bucked up and spared the MB and the officials the embarrassment of having to give and receive the broom award the next time.

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Reward work

IT is sad and demoralising to see the president of the Hulu Selangor District Council being presented with a broom



The broom awards recently given by the Selangor Menteri Besar, Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, to under-performing local authorities in the state has not gone down well with civil servants.

for poor performance in assessment and arrears collections.

While it is the aim of all local authorities to collect near 100 per cent of their assessment payments, we must remember that many local authorities are unable to achieve this target despite the tremendous effort made by them to collect as much assessment as possible.

Some even offer incentives for early payment of assessment. Logically, no local authority would like to have arrears; no one likes to be owed large sums of money.

It cannot be denied that the bigger and city-centred local authorities collect assessment and recover arrears better than their smaller counterparts on the periphery of cities

and large towns.

Such a situation exposes the differences between the categories of local authorities.

The reality is that collection of assessment does not only depend upon the supposedly "poor attitude" of employees or the "non-productivity" of a department of a particular local authority, but hinges largely on where it is located and the social and economic composition of the community of that local authority.

Sometimes, local authorities are in a dilemma when they have to seal premises of those who cannot pay their assessments and who they know fall in the urban-poor category.

Local authorities are also expected to perform numerous functions and provide services which are at times beyond their capacity, but they persevere.

Perhaps it is time that some of the good work carried out by local authorities was rewarded.

Therefore, it is upsetting to see a local authority being presented a broom for poor performance by the menteri besar at the Selangor Tax Collection Special Award 2006.

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