



## KERATAN AKHBAR

AKHBAR	:	THE STAR			
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JABATAN	:	UMUM			
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## Expedite formation of Ombudsman Malaysia

THE government should expedite the introduction of an ombudsman to help enhance integrity and governance in addressing public complaints.

Last month, the Cabinet gave the go-ahead for the establishment of Ombudsman Malaysia, which is supposed to replace the Public Complaints Bureau.

As the Ombudsman Bill to introduce the body was not tabled in the December sitting of Parliament, which has just adjourned *sine die*, it is hoped that it could be tabled at the next sitting.

It was earlier reported that Ombudsman Malaysia was expected to be in operation in the first quarter of 2020 if Parliament passed the Bill in December.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had in September announced that the Public Complaints Bureau would be known and function as Ombudsman Malaysia, and an Ombudsman Act would be enacted to ensure more effective management of public complaints in the country.

The time has come for the establishment of Ombudsman Malaysia, which could serve as a body that will hear and investigate cases of maladministration.

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Mohamad Ariff Yusof had also cited the example of New Zealand where the ombudsman there functioned as an investigator and Parliament researcher with authority to hear any matter concerning government maladministration.

I hope this could be part of the efforts to reduce bureaucratic red tape and improve administrative efficiency in all government departments and agencies.

The establishment of the ombudsman system would be a step in the right direction to address all public grievances against all departments and agencies.

I have been highlighting the ombudsman issue as far back as November 2003.

The term "ombudsman" is derived from the Swedish word meaning "grievance person" or "representative or agent of the people".

In *Oxford* dictionaries, it is defined as the "people's defender", who is appointed to safeguard citizens against abuse or misuse of administrative power by the executive.

As the citizens' friend and protector, the ombudsman is entrusted to enquire personally into alleged wrongs inflicted on the man in the street by public authorities.

In the early 70s, Malaysia had wanted to consider such a system and had in fact studied the New Zealand ombudsman model with a view towards its implementation. However, the plan was shelved and in its place the Public Complaints Bureau was set up.

The establishment of the Ombudsman for Financial Services, which started operations on Oct 1, 2016, shows that Malaysians are now more open to such a concept.

TAN SRI LEE LAM THYE  
Kuala Lumpur