

Eradicating Corruption: The Roles and Initiatives of Royal Malaysia Police

Mr. Azha

In the era of globalization, the scope of policing has widened and Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) needs a paradigm shift to meet the present and future challenges. While RMP is approaching 204 years old this year, this institution needs to reinvent and rebrand to stay continuously relevant. Currently (until 30th September 2011) the population of the RMP stands at 110,594 police personnel, with eight departments namely Management Department, Criminal Investigation Department, Commercial Crime Investigation Department, Narcotics Crime Investigation Department, Internal Security and Public Order Department, Special Branch Department, Counter Terrorism Department and Logistics Department.

A key challenge for RMP is to regain the good image that has been seriously undermined in the last decade due to mounting public perception of corruption and abuse of power, the result which came from the public inquiries conducted by a Royal Commission in 2004-2005 and submitted its first report on the 15th May 2005. As such, our 5th Prime Minister of Malaysia saw and stressed a few challenges for the RMP to confront, inter alia:

- a) To increase people's confidence in RMP through a change in police mindset and values, vigorous action against corruption and providing a more caring and humane service to the community.
- b) To enhance the effectiveness of work process through such measures as modernizing work procedures, restructuring organization and deployment, and reducing bureaucracy.

- c) To strengthen the accountability and the sense of responsibility of senior police officers for the performance of their respective departments and units as well as their subordinates by implementing measures such as leadership by example, instilling discipline and sensitivity towards the needs and morale of the staff.

A second Commission was set up in 2005 to investigate the standard operating procedures in relation to body searches after a video clip of a body search of a woman by the police was released by the media. This brought new issues such as the organizational ethics and accountability to the forefront. Studies conducted in 2008 found that the biggest challenge faced by RMP was the issue of integrity. This was based on the statistics that out of 6,355 disciplinary cases involving police officers between 2002-2008, 93.5% were on issues of integrity while only 6.5% were on competency.

According to research conducted in 2010 by Transparency International (Malaysia) on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and **Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)** based on the score of (1 – *not corrupt*, 5- *very corrupt*), the police force was perceived as the most corrupted institution by scoring 4.1 compared to other agencies. May I pick the statement of Tim Newburn (1999: 14) on the corruption issue that happened in the police force, “*what is corrupted is the ‘special trust’ invested in the occupation*”. Therefore, we (RMP) are taking a very serious view and going full strides forward on the strategies to drive change and evolve our police force according to our vision to become “**A leading enforcement agency of integrity, competent and committed in making the nation safe, peaceful and prosperous**”.

I. Malaysia's Government Transformation Programme (GTP) - National Key Result

Areas (NKRAs)

In 2010, the Prime Minister of Malaysia marked the introduction and implementation of Malaysia's Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and a new chapter in our young nation's history. This bold and unprecedented programme was aimed to radically transform the way the Government worked so we could better serve the people. This entire programme is based on the premise of the government's commitment to "People First, Performance Now" under the 1Malaysia banner. There are six (6) pillars or National Key Result Areas (NKRAs) in the GTP based on the people's most pressing concerns. These are Reducing Crime, **Fighting Corruption**, Improving Student Outcomes, Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households, Improving Rural Basic Infrastructure and Improving Urban Public Transport. With the implementation of the initiatives under the Fighting Corruption NKRA, the government has continued to demonstrate dedication towards eliminating corruption and graft in the nation.

The Fighting Corruption NKRA focuses on three key areas that are most prone to corruption, which are regulatory and enforcement agencies, government procurement and grand corruption. Under the Fighting Corruption NKRA for 'Regulatory and Enforcement Agencies', RMP is working together with the other four enforcement agencies — namely the Malaysia Anti Corruption Commission, Royal Malaysia Custom and Excise Department, Road Transport Department and Immigration Department — and subsequently came up with five initiatives on fighting corruption in the respective agencies;

- i. To Strengthen and Empower Compliance Units in Law Enforcement Agencies — RMP (Disciplinary Unit under Inspector General Police, Compliance and Monitoring Unit). This unit will emphasise enforcement

to eradicate corruption abuse of power and compliance of rules and regulations.

- ii. Rotation of Staff in “Hot Jobs” – This involves rotating enforcement personnel between jobs or workplace (in high-risk areas / jobs) to prevent them from developing close relationships with and collaborating with criminal syndicates / organisations and to strengthen good governance and values. A list of hot-jobs which have been identified in RMP are the Criminal Investigation Department — The Secret Societies / Gambling / Vice Unit, Intelligence Unit and the Police Traffic Department.
- iii. Reduce Bureaucracy / Institutionalise Control Mechanism e.g. ‘**1 Reporting’ System** – With the integration of ‘Police Reporting System’ (PRS-for crime) and ‘Cars Accident Reporting System’ (CARS), everyone is able to lodge their car accident report in any police station which will benefit the people by providing more efficient and transparent system using the latest ICT Technology by RMP.
- iv. Reduce Discretion Through Automation – To reduce ‘direct contact’ / ‘human interaction’ between the people (client) and police officer which is considered as one of the initiatives to reduce opportunities for corruption. Through automation the police can increase the effectiveness of the ‘end result’ by reducing the time on the service given and service rendered will be more efficient, accurate and cannot be manipulated, e.g. Narcotics Information Management System (SPIN), a biometric system mechanism used by Narcotics Department, RMP to prevent data manipulation to those who are under the ‘Police Supervision Orders’ (OKP) under the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952. By using this system, a systematic database will be able to determine the number of registered OKPs compared to the manual

system which will increase effectiveness in monitoring them and prevent any malpractice by any police personnel on this issue.

- v. Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA) 2010 – to encourage our informers or officers to break the ‘blue code of silence’ against fellow officers who are involved in corrupt practices, criminal acts or other misconduct. Under this act, the public are also encouraged to inform the relevant authorities of any form of misused power/misconduct by police personnel. The Act also provides immunity to informers from civil or criminal charges.

Apart from the five initiatives above, the RMP also came forward with a few more additional initiatives, i.e. rewarding police officers when rejecting bribes. The rewards could be monetary or a letter of commendation. RMP has shown very impressive results with the highest statistics of 160 cases for the year 2009 until September 2011. The awareness among enforcement officers to reject bribes can be seen from the Malaysia Anti Corruption Commission’s statistics, i.e. from the total arrest of 944 bribe offenders in 2010. Arrests of those who gave bribes last year were 414 persons (43.8%) compared to only 108 in 2009, making it the highest number in history.

The quarterly publication of ‘Integrity Bulletin’ containing advice and measures taken in upholding integrity in the police force is another continuous campaign to eradicate corruption and abuse of power in the RMP. Initiating the Anti Corruption Poster is part of our campaign to promote and enhance the value of integrity among police personnel and the public. These additional initiatives will increase the public awareness and they will be more informed on the dangers of giving and receiving bribes. In order to stay relevant, RMP has little choice but to work hard on enhancing the integrity not only of its human capital but also in its work culture and policing procedures.

II. Inspector General Police Secretariat (Disciplinary Department) of Royal Malaysia Police

Since 1976, RMP had practiced a system of ‘check and balance’ in order to maintain a fair, transparent and full compliance with rules and regulations when carrying out their duties in uniform. This unit, then known as the Disciplinary Unit was permanently reformed as the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Secretariat (Disciplinary Department) by virtue of IGP Standing Orders KPN 87/8 dated 25th March 2004 and put in direct command of the Inspector General of Police with a specific role to discipline the Police Force which includes investigation of violations and subsequent action against defaulters.

The reformation of IGP Secretariat (Disciplinary Department) under direct orders from the Inspector General of Police shows that RMP gives priority to discipline and integrity in order to achieve its vision and mission. The objective of this secretariat is to strengthen police integrity towards a fair, efficient and effective police service.

III. The Role of Inspector General Police Secretariat (Disciplinary Department) of Royal Malaysia Police

This division is headed by the Deputy Head of the IGP Secretariat (Disciplinary Department) and has a wide framework supported by a strong team of legally qualified and experienced officers to ensure compliance with laws, procedures and best practices by the police personnel. This division consists of the following:

a) The Implementation and Enforcement Unit

To carry out inspection on all the police units to ensure compliance with rules and regulations and subsequent remedial action or disciplinary proceedings. Within

this unit is also the Operations cell which carries out special operations based on information of corruption, abuse of power or authority or any other dereliction of duty. This unit also works in tandem with the Narcotics Department in random testing of police officers for suspected drug abuse to deter officers from living unacceptable lifestyles, which will likely to lead to corruption, criminal behavior or unethical behavior as police personnel.

b) Inspection / Monitoring “Drugs and Disciplinary Control System”

This system, which has been in place since the 1980s for the rank and file personnel, has been extended to include senior officers up to Superintendent. This is a close control system whereby every officer is put in charge and supervises a few subordinates. Supervision in this respect is not limited to on-duty hours but encompassing off-duty hours including lifestyle, friends, family, property and drug abuse.

c) The Investigation Unit

This Unit is responsible for carrying out internal investigations which are based on two factors;

i. Complaints

Investigations are based on complaints made by the public or by police personnel themselves, either by letters, walk-ins, telephone, through the Government Public Complaints Bureau (BPA) or any other sources such as emails, faxes and texting.

ii. Internal Misconduct

Investigation based on internal misconduct and dereliction of duty. All investigations are conducted without fear or favour. Investigation is also carried out at the contingent/state level where the final action is determined either by the State Chief Police Officers. Cases of interest are investigated and dealt with at the Federal level, and final decisions are made by either the Deputy Inspector General or Inspector General Police.

d) The Intelligence Unit

This unit provides intelligence and technical support for the Operations and Investigations Unit.

e) Complaints Unit

The Complaints Unit's primary function is to attend to and receive complaints and information from the public or by police officers. All complaints and information are treated in strict confidence. All follow up actions are commenced without jeopardizing the identity of the complainant.

f) Declaration of Assets Unit

This Unit is solely responsible for the management, investigation and recording of declarations of assets of all Police Officers. Under the Public Officers (Conduct and Discipline) Regulations 1993, all civil servants are required to declare their assets (on joining the service, procurement, disposal and when otherwise required). RMP has made this process more stringent including by having a dedicated unit to monitor all asset declarations and conduct investigations. RMP officers must make

full disclosures when making declarations unlike other civil servants who only need to make a basic declaration.

RMP will continue to strengthen its efforts towards more serious and effective measures, with greater intensity and focus in driving out corrupt practices in the police force. Society's expectation of RMP is very high indeed. They not only want a competent police force but expect police officers to be of high integrity. Police actions will withstand scrutiny of the public if decisions are made with integrity, for the sake of peace and security alone and nothing else. Sir Robert Peel, the father of modern policing in England had said:

“The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions...”

No police organisation, regardless of its past glory or history, can claim success without the support, cooperation and understanding from members of the public and community. RMP still has much work to do in its fight against corruption to regain public confidence and trust. There is no “one size fits all solution”. We must change and keep on developing “new formula and medicine” to fight “corruption's disease” so as to change people's negative perception towards RMP. Though it is not an overnight job, we strongly believe with the Government's will, commitment and support in the form of a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption (political will), sharing and integrating the value of integrity among all my fellow officers, we are on the right track towards a clean, transparent, fair and trustworthy law enforcement agency for the people. Thank you.