

## PUBLIC SAFETY AND THE LAW: NAVIGATING THE FUTURE

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### ABSTRACT

*The issues of public safety have currently attracted many personalities in Malaysia. The Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and scholars have expressed that the Royal Malaysia Police as the custodian of peace and public safety should bring down crime so as to ensure the tranquility and harmony of the nation. The demand for comprehensive policing is increasing. Therefore, co-production process involving the public, private sector and civil sector is needed. In this context, the cooperation between the general public, various institutions, governmental and non-governmental bodies are highly desired to provide peace and security which would be the platform for a vibrant economy for the country. Early childhood education is also important as it is fundamental in building confidence and beliefs. The element of trust between the people and the police is the key and essential criterion to build partnership, sharing information and enhancing community policing. Changing the mindset of the policemen towards strengthening service delivery is vital in the process of navigating towards a safer and more peaceful country. The social media will also be a transforming platform if it is managed appropriately. This article illustrates the important factors in order to develop a safer and more peaceful nation in the future.*

**Keywords:** *Public Safety, Co-production, Strengthening Service Delivery, Changing the mindset*

### Introduction

There are many personalities who share a common concern about public safety. These personalities will not hesitate to be the alternative voices in drawing people into deeper and serious conversations about changes, transformation and development in the field of public safety and law.

The objective of this article is to share some of the concerns with regards to public safety in the context for the future. What policing challenges may be against a backdrop of an uncertain economic future on virtually every nation?

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This uncertainty challenges the Royal Malaysia Police into a more deliberate and targeted partnership, to be more forceful and proactive in making our professional vision heard in debates and consultations with politicians and opinion leaders. Therefore, mutual trust is the key to the future.

Many scholars and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in our country opined that the Royal Malaysia Police as the custodian of the nation's peace and tranquility have seen countless young men and women who have put in relentless efforts and sacrifices to ensure the tranquility and harmony of our nation. Each time a policeman stands up for peace and security, or act to improve the wellbeing of others, he sends forth a ripple of hope that can take down the walls of illegality, crime and wrong-doings.

The police operations are or may be diverse, yet we are bound by a common goal – to bring down crime and to be the best what the Royal Malaysia Police can be. The passion for work, community and nation are what drives the police to go beyond boundaries in their each and every day duties. This value of policing is increasingly determined by a co-production process involving the various public, private and civil sectors.

There must be no doubt on these sacrifices which have directly or indirectly brought about development and progress to our nation. It is the peaceful environment that would make our nation a destination of choice for foreign investment and tourism including medical tourism. As a professional entity, the Royal Malaysia Police manages its relationship with political leaders and public opinion multipliers proactively with a view of co-creation the value of policing to produce order and security.

The Royal Malaysia Police must be held in high esteem as the 'Pride of the Nation' - as the leading enforcement agency of the country. This pride of glory is not only flying high locally for the last 206 years but was also acknowledged internationally via several peace keeping missions under the United Nations where our 'Men-in-Blue' have held their heads high serving as commanders and leaders of international contingent. Most of our leaders and the general public appreciated and are proud of the vibrant workforce of Royal Malaysia Police. It is discovered that the following features are important to build and create a safer and more peaceful Malaysia.

## **Cooperation and Support from Public: No man is an Island**

As it is often quoted, the maxim that 'No man is an Island' is most suitable, true and applicable to policing. The maxim is most aptly demonstrated by the Chinese character of a man 人 which clearly denotes that an individual must have the support of another lest it will tumble. In this context, the Royal Malaysia Police as an 'individual' if it may call it – would need the support of the community and also the various institutions - public and private, governmental and non-governmental (Samuels, 2003).

Let's look at Malaysia holistically, encompassing amongst others, culture, economy, politics and policing. Can we weave it together with all the people of diverse background - our society? The answer is 'No'. Therefore it is important to have a matured, responsible and inclusive society who cares and understands each other's culture. A society that appreciates the nexus between Economy, Police and Nation and most of all realizes and acknowledges that the 'Policing Institution' too is not an island (Samuels, 2003).

In fact, Malaysia needs a society that has basic human values. A society should put efforts to be honest, truthful and compassionate towards others. A society should genuinely be concerned about others. A society should have love and respect for others. A society should have nothing to hide, making it easier to act transparently. With such a society, it is possible to look forward to a peaceful, safe and secure Malaysia which would be the platform for growth and a vibrant economy.

Malaysia is somewhat unique in a way that it is multiracial. Through the years, the various societies are aware of the need to unite in pursuing nation-building – that is each do not stand and live alone as an island. Through racial harmony and the spirit of inclusiveness, our society would not only thrive but prosper. In so doing, the society plays a 'Futuristic Role' in crime prevention.

The Royal Malaysia Police is an adaptive and open organization. The Royal Malaysia Police always focuses on adapting to society's development and needs, and on delivering a customer oriented professional police service – based on cooperation and community connection as a key stakeholder in the relationship. This means that the community will be consulted and intimately involved throughout the entire process of crime reduction (Thakur, 2006). Hence, it is timely to remind the society that it is not enough to be comfortable and say that other's problem is not their problem. One day, the society will face these problems at their doorstep if they chooses to stay away. There is a quote by a German born theoretical and most

influential physicist, Albert Einstein: ‘The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who do not do anything about it.’ (<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/alberteins143096.html> accessed on 2 June 2014).

### **The Importance of Childhood Education**

Early childhood education is important. Therefore, the business community and the corporate sector should provide early childhood education for the children of their staff. Cumulatively, this would provide for a larger segment of our future Malaysian society. The reason is that this will build a foundation for schools to succeed and success breeds success. (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf> accessed on 2 June 2014).

In fact, investing in the foundation of school readiness starts from birth to aged five. One of the most studied initiatives in this area was the Perry Preschool Program (Delors, 1996). The result shows that children who went through the Perry Program were 22% more likely to finish high school and were arrested less than half as often for felonies. They were half as likely to receive public assistance and 3 times as likely to own their own homes.

The question raised is not about whether Malaysians can afford early childhood education, but whether they can afford not to provide it. A simple hypothesis is: the government should pay less for prisons if it pays more for early childhood education and therefore will be able to build a safer and more peaceful Malaysia.

Many scholars have proved that education is a fundamental element to create a better future of a nation. Policing of the future and policing the future generations are two elements important in building a safer and more peaceful Malaysia. Future generations of an intelligent, critical thinking and creative Malaysian workforce is needed. These elements would be able to contribute positively to a thriving economy and a more peaceful Malaysia.

However, around the world, the challenge for any community or government is how to give the children a complete education so as to set themselves up for a brighter future and a decent chance of life. Excluding children from the education system robs them of a hope for a better future. Being in school enhances integration into society and makes the children feel vested in a country. A 2009 ministry study found that 44,000 school-aged children had never attended school, a majority being refugees seeking asylum or children of irregular migrants and foreign workers ([http://www.unicef.org/eapro/media\\_news12-annual\\_status\\_on\\_childrens\\_rights.html](http://www.unicef.org/eapro/media_news12-annual_status_on_childrens_rights.html)

accessed on 18 July 2014) The reality is that these children are here to stay. So, the better educated they are, the better it will be for our society.

It is noted that investment in social infrastructure such as education can help to lighten the burden on the police. As quoted Malala Yousafzai – the girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban for her outspoken views on the importance of education: ‘One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.’ (<https://secure.aworldatschool.org/page/content/the-text-of-malala-yousafzais-speech-at-the-united-nations/> accessed on 3 June 2014). In essence, this 16 year-old child realizes the importance of education as this commodity is a rarity or maybe a luxury, in her home country whereas in Malaysia, the availability and accessibility to education is taken for granted.

It also noted that the women and young people make up almost two-thirds of the Malaysian population. (<http://pqi.stats.gov.my/result.php?token=2c6b5c2d62825491e814f606f6cac126> accessed on 18 Julai 2014). In every sense, they are the nation’s next emerging economy. The government and private entities must take all the necessary actions to meet the needs and create opportunities, from maternal health care to jobs. For generations, mankind have secretly watched intelligent, imaginative and hugely talented mothers, sisters, wives and daughters pushed into the background, purely on account of their gender. Now, it is necessary to push and bring down all boundaries to ensure that they are not left behind (Gelsthorpe, 2009).

There is no short cut to problem solving, as is often said, as an example that loses weight quickly by cutting off both limbs but that will be an impediment particularly to mobility. Strategic thinking and looking beyond the horizon about where our nation should be a decade from now, is about making the right decision today to shape our Malaysia of tomorrow. If failing to do so, the future will come to us with a vengeance. Social alienation and deepening instability will undermine the prospect for peace, security and prosperity for all.

Therefore, it is timely to urge the leaders to ensure that in the process, the rights and opportunities of women and youths are not trampled on. When people are talking about growing economies they are referring to China, India and Women. Nonetheless, the Royal Malaysia Police is talking about Crime Reduction Strategies, emphasizing on Community Policing, Education and also Women & Youth. On the same point, The Honourable Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak<sup>2</sup> urged the audience to empower women and appreciate their potential

<sup>2</sup> The Honourable Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, currently the Prime Minister of Malaysia since 2009. He previously held the post of Deputy Prime Minister from 7 January 2004 until he succeeded Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Prime Minister on 3 April 2009.

contributions to the development of every nation at the recent World Islamic Economic Forum (WIEF) 2013 in London.

## **Trust**

Policing has shifted from what was very much a professional business where the police have a say themselves, to now whereby the community seems to have more say. This is one of the challenges the Royal Malaysia Police must accept although at times the community may not know what's best for them. It is acknowledged that the community has a legitimate right to ask for what they think is best for them. Therefore, the Royal Malaysia Police will have a very difficult task of bringing the two ends to the middle where failing to do so will lose the trust of the community.

Trust must be at the core of everything that the Royal Malaysia Police do, even as the police triangulate between reactive and proactive spaces, the political influences on policing and partnerships and cooperation strategies. Trust between the people and police, among and even within the police is the key that unlocks the future. Trust is essential to building partnerships and sharing information. Where there is no trust, the policing business cannot be operated effectively and efficiently.

When looking at trust through a different lens and in a different way, it becomes a new opportunity. By looking at it as a positive tool and developing trust towards new partnerships, the Royal Malaysia Police will be able to explore and leverage off others to assist and support law enforcement endeavors through traditional and non-traditional partners (Chesney-Lind and Irwin, 2008). This partnership would eradicate duplication, reduce costs and increase efficiency. It can also enhance sharing of ideas and methods of effective community policing.

From time immemorial, police interactions with the public have always been on the basis of some bad incidents that the public had encountered. However, modern policing requires that the interaction with public should be proactive. The community would like to see the men-in-blue walking the beat where he becomes a familiar face to that community where the policeman is trusted (Furlong and Cartmel, 2008). Policemen are after all members of society who have taken a full-time job and shall be "a life-time career" in law-enforcement (Chermak and Weiss, 2003).

It is also emphasized that adhering to the professional ethos of legitimacy, accountability, innovation and coherence is key to sustaining public trust in policing organisations. This public trust and eventually confidence is in turn

a crucial enabler of change, allowing the Royal Malaysia Police to adopt new methods and approaches to deal with emerging and future threats.

The New Key Result Areas (NKRA) programs by the Royal Malaysia Police are very effective in terms of creating safe cities in Malaysia. The recent crime reduction analysis shows that the index crime dropped 15% in 2010, 11% in 2011 and 7.6% in 2012 (PDRM 2010-2012) Meanwhile, street crime was reduced 35% in 2010, 39.7% and 41.3% in 2012 (PDRM 2010-2012). A collaborative effort between the Royal Malaysia Police, local authorities and other enforcement agencies together with the public resulted in reducing the level of personal worry of becoming a crime victim (See Table 1 below). This result was based on the opinion of the general public (5,020 respondents) who extended their views about crime in Malaysia in October 2013.

**Table 1: Crime Reduction Analysis 2010-2012**

National Key Performance Index <sup>3</sup>	2010	2011	2012
Reduce index crime	15%	11%	7.6%
Reduce street crime	35%	39.7%	41.3%
Reduce fear of becoming victim of crime	58.5%	58.5%	57.3%
Improve public satisfaction of services	55.8%	70.5%	65.7%

Source : PDRM (2010-2012)

Omnipresence Programme by Royal Malaysia Police has contributed toward crime reduction in the country. This is regarded as 'High Profile Policing' where senior police officers with the rank of Inspector and above together with junior police officers make rounds at the targeted areas. It motivates the junior police officers to work with full confidence when the senior police officers making round together with them. Uniformed police personnel can be seen walking into banks, shops, or other places to provide direct ground contact with the general public. As such, the general public has more confidence and trust with the police and this further leads the general public to provide information or suggestion to the police on the ground.

<sup>3</sup> Elements of National Key Performance Index are (i) reducing crime index; (ii) reducing street crime; (iii) reducing fear of becoming victim of crime.

## **Changing Mindset**

Complacency has often been the root cause of the downfall of many civilizations, nations and organizations. Although the Royal Malaysia Police has achieved significant progress in several areas, there are still plenty of rooms for improvement. Change or Transformation only happens when policemen start to question and re-examine their basic assumptions in the light of the current realities. As has often been said, 'It is easier to move mountains than to change the mindsets and attitudes of people'. (<http://brightdrops.com/dr-seuss-quotes> accessed on 3 June 2014). In this context, the futurist, Alvin Toffler captures new reality and quotes the following:-

In the future, 'illiteracy will not be defined by those who cannot read and write, but by those who cannot learn and relearn'. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/09/opinion/sunday/friedman-new-rules.html> accessed on 3 June 2014). Any form of standing still is deadly.

Truly, there is a dire need for the policemen to change their mindsets and focus on the people they serve rather than purely on processes and procedures. It is easier said than done; just like the old adage, 'Old habits die hard'. Thus, changing the mindset of the policeman remains a formidable challenge in our quest towards strengthening service delivery.

Deep-rooted changes will be required to ensure policing services remain relevant to the community. There must be a consultative and holistic approach on the provision of police services. It is especially important to be aware of the needs of the community and to recognize that the police should work with the government and private entities to bring in other resources within the community.

Recognizing that the police cannot possibly do everything on their own would be a crucial part of the whole transformational change in our minds. Community mobilization is an important agent of transformation. The Royal Malaysia Police need to work with people who can influence changes and also need to manage the expectations of the community by being open and candid about the realities and limitations of policing. It is about communication and being forthright and honest in that communication (Delattre, 2006).

## **Social Media: Networking Tools**

The social media explosion provided both risks and opportunities. As a public relation tool, the social media is able to take the law enforcement profession



and organization to new levels of operational effectiveness and standing within our communities. The social media is and will also be a transforming platform if they are managed appropriately and well-regulated. As an example, it allows the police to communicate instantaneously with a large number of people but, tons of hard work to build public trust can also be instantly eroded by a single tweet about a poorly managed incident.

Social media is the demarcation line between the last generation of the old civilization and the first generation of the new civilization. It is called Citizen Journalism (Ward and Ostrom, 2006) and Global Conversation which has been widely used to share information and build a sense of community. The dark side of social media was best reflected during the London Riot where criminal activities were said to be coordinated through social media. These same phenomena were also seen on numerous occasions in the Malaysian context.

The increasing influence of social media can perhaps be ameliorated by enhanced knowledge of its capabilities and risks. Thus, it is strongly recommended that not only the Royal Malaysia Police but also, other law enforcement agencies and its multiplicity of stakeholders to place particular and special emphasis on this area. Bearing in mind the inter-connectivity of the current broadcast society, the fire on social media is much more difficult to put out (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0007681309001232> accessed on 3 June 2014). The question is: Whether it is possible in developing an effective global framework to govern the use of social networking in law enforcement?

However, it is noticed on 16 July 2014 that the total number of 1,051, 653 Facebook users like the Royal Malaysia Police Facebook website which comprises of 1.1 million pages that are liked by the users (<https://ms-my.facebook.com/PolisDirajaMalaysia> accessed on 16 July 2014). This is a clear evidence to show that currently, the public are using the social media to communicate with the police.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the past and current records, it is established that the Royal Malaysia Police serves with undivided loyalty to the nation. The members of Royal Malaysia Police are professionals and serve with integrity, discipline, excellence and enthusiasm in support of the Government's transformation plans and the Blue Ocean Strategy to produce an innovative and productive society (W. C. Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

The speed at which the leaders approach these interchanges varies from organizations to organizations. Some leaders have already taken the path to becoming new 'transformed' leaders (Patrick, 2012). But, others do not see the urgent need to choose a path until it is too late, and the path is chosen for them. The Royal Malaysia Police are not fighting for survival or maintaining competitiveness but breaking away to develop a compelling vision to be the finest policing institution of the region.

As for the future, it is an exciting place to be, but for those who do not engage in future visualization will not be prepared for the changes to take place. To be future-ready is to equip our children with future skills. The Royal Malaysia Police will be future-ready to re-invent, re-design and re-engineer. Let's focus and devote our thoughts in creating and ensuring a better and safer Malaysia.

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