Why should people pay a security tax?
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COMMENT Recently, Malaysians were shocked at the news that 10 robbers armed with machetes (parang) had dared to rob 70 customers who were having their supper at a seafood restaurant at around midnight in early June in bustling Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.

However, what was more shocking was what the police commented about the deteriorating security issue in the aftermath of the incident.

Assistant head of the IGP Secretariat (corporate communications) ACP Ramli Mohamed Yusoof said the police couldn't patrol in certain areas for too long because they have to carry out other more important tasks. Moreover, he urged 24-hour restaurants' owners to hire security guards and install closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras as part of the preventive measures for their premises.

Ramli's remarks pointed out two facts: 1, the police are facing a shortage of manpower; 2, the police are handing over its policing duty to the people. In other words, people have to take care themselves.

Why are the police running short of manpower? Why should people pay extra money to hire private guards to protect them when they have already paid taxes to fund the operation of the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM)?

In fact, Malaysians don't need another royal commission of inquiry to probe into why the police are running out of manpower because the 2005 Dzaiddin Royal Commission Report has answered the question.

With regard to the second question, the answer is simply that it is illogical for the people to pay extra money or a third tax to provide security for themselves.

In a reply to a parliamentary question last year, the government revealed that there were 515 gated communities and 636 guarded communities, combined gated and guarded 1,151 communities, in early 2012 in peninsular Malaysia. Of course, this numbers is even higher nowadays.

Assuming the minimum and maximum size of each community is between 200 to 500 households, there are a total minimum of 230,020 to a maximum of 575,500 households being part of gated and guarded communities.

NONEAssuming each household pays RM50 to RM100 for monthly gated and guarded service charges, the monthly third tax cost a minimum of RM11.5 million to a maximum of RM57.5 million, while yearly amounts to more than hundred million ringgit.

In contrast, how do our police spend their money?

Two trends

From the table, we can observe that the funds allocated can be broadly classified into two trends:

1) The government has invested heavily in reducing the Index Crime and improving the Safety Perception Index. Nevertheless, all National Key Result Areas (NKRA) budgets are one-off allocations for which the duration of the budget would be dependent on political will. In other words, the government is not serious about making fighting crimes as Police's permanent priority task.

In addition, the police look like they are obsessed with the perception war. In 2012 combined allocations for improving Safety Perception Index and Public Satisfaction on Police Performance was RM197 million, while in 2013 it has increased to a whopping RM275 million, a 40.1 percent jump.

2) Enhancing criminal investigation and increasing charge rate are still not the priority of the government. This is reflected in the allocations for criminal investigation which saw its allocation increased from RM507 million to RM524 million, a miserable 3 percent increment.

Meanwhile, the allocations for improving charge rate dropped 99 percent from RM6.6 million to a shocking RM45,000. Overall, the allocations are still far less than management, logistics, and internal security and public order.

Basically, the PDRM needs to undergo a paradigm shift of mindset from merely addressing crimes on an ad-hoc basis to making it their permanent task. The police obsession with the perception war makes them focus too much on public relation matters instead of investigating who and where the real criminals are. Most importantly, the police need to reallocate the operating expenditures to that on criminal investigation and crime fighting above all other matters.

In summary, if the police could allocate the budgets wisely, the people would have no need to pay the third tax.

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