

No Cabinet Committee On Worsening Crime Situation?
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The Cabinet on Wednesday set up a special Cabinet Committee over the looming water crisis in Selangor.

The question that is uppermost in the minds of Malaysians is why no Cabinet committee has been set up to deal with the worst and most palpable fear of crime haunting various parts of the country!

This question becomes even more poignant following reports of the latest high-profile victim of crime – Faizah Shuib, 67 the widow of former Cabinet Minister Megat Junid who was Deputy Home Minister for more than a decade from the mid-eighties to mid-nineties and major implementer of the infamous Project Mahathir in Sabah in the early nineties.

It is reported that Faizah's house was robbed by three men, believed to be Indonesians, who escaped with jewellery and watches worth RM50,000 and she was tied up during the robbery.

There is a very serious disconnect between one the one hand, repeated assurances by the Home Minister, Hishammuddin Hussein and the police of a declining crime rate in the country and on the other, lack of public confidence and credibility even among foreign investors in such assurances, with rising and undoubtedly the worst palpable fear of crime haunting Malaysians in various parts of the country – not just at shopping malls, but in the streets, public places and even the privacy of the homes!

My attention has been drawn to an establishment blog which conducted a poll which ended two days ago on whether Hishammuddin is fit to be Home Minister.

Out of 622 who voted in the three-day poll, a staggering 96% gave Hishammuddin "the thumbs down", with the largest number of votes (400 votes or 64%) said that Hishammuddin is not fit to be Minister of anything, 102 votes or 16% said that Hishammuddin is not fit to be Home Minister, and a sizable number of 94 or 15% "who are beyond fed up with Hisham".

Only 26 voted yes to Hishammuddin as fit to be Home Minister!

Considering that this is an establishment blog with mostly Barisan Nasional supporters, the result is a most shocking and crushing one, demonstrating that public confidence and support for Hishammuddin as Home Minister has reached a very low ebb even in Umno/BN circles.

This poll showing 96% lack of support for Hishammuddin in an establishment blog visited by mostly pro-Barisan Nasional supporters has punctured the National Day and Malaysia Day theme of "Janji DiTepati", especially with the worst and most palpable fear of crime enveloping the country – even raising questions whether there should be a new Home Minister to deliver the most elementary of fundamental human rights every Malaysian should be entitled to, the right to be free from crime and to be free from the fear of crime!

After more than three years as Home Minister, can Hishammuddin say that he has secured

these two fundamental human rights to be free from crime and free from the fear of crime for all Malaysians?

Eight years ago, the Dzaidin Police Royal Commission conducted a public opinion survey between 22nd November 2004 and 1st December 2004, and found that 89% of the 575 adult respondents from various parts of the country were "worried" to "extremely worried" about the occurrence of crime in their neighbourhood. Only 11% or a ratio of one in ten of the respondents were not worried. The level of worry was broadly similar across ethnic groups in urban areas from all 13 states and the Federal Territory.

Some five years later after Hishammuddin's appointment as Home Minister, the Home Ministry conducted an online opinion survey on its website from 20th to 28th July 2009, and found a worsening in public confidence in the crime situation in the country with public worry about the lack of safety from crime and their fear of crime increased from 89% in 2004 to 97% - while the number of respondents who felt safe from crime fell sharply from one in ten in 2004 to one in 100 in 2009!

The following were the findings of the Home Ministry website poll in 2009:

- 97% or 9,729 out of 10,060 respondents felt unsafe because of the high crime rate, with only 1% or 89 respondents felt safe and 2% or 242 respondents in the "uncertain" category.
- 95% or 8,883 out of 9,319 respondents felt that the safety of the people was not guaranteed as compared to 3% or 248 respondents who felt it was still guaranteed, with 2% or 188 respondents in the "uncertain" category.
- 94% or 8,743 out of 9,261 respondents felt that government had not done its best to ensure that the safety of the people was at the best level with 2% or 185 respondents felt that the government had done its best, and 4% or 333 persons "uncertain"?

Dare Hishammuddin ask the Home Ministry to conduct an update of this online opinion poll on the Home Ministry website to ascertain whether in the past three years, there is any improvement in the percentage of respondents who feel firstly, unsafe because of the high crime rate; secondly, the safety of the people is not guaranteed and thirdly, that the government had not done its best to ensure that the safety of the people is at its best level?

The opinion poll on all these three categories three years ago were very dismal – registering 97% of the respondents who felt unsafe because of the high crime rate; 95% felt that the safety of the people was not guaranteed and 94% felt that the government had not done its best to ensure that the safety of the people was at the best level.

Three years have passed with Hishammuddin as the Home Minister. Could the results be possibly even worse if an opinion poll by the Home Ministry website is repeated now?

There must be an end to the denial syndrome about the widespread public skepticism and disbelief in government claims about decline in the crime statistics since the launch of the Government Transformation Programme and the National Key Result Area in reducing crime and the very real situation of palpable public fear of crime which is probably at its worst stage in the nation's history.

It is therefore most regrettable that the Cabinet has failed to set up a Cabinet Committee on the crime situation or even to put on its agenda the government's failure to deliver to Malaysians their two most fundamental human rights – the right to be free from crime and

to be free from the fear of crime.

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