

Why do Malaysian police have to labour under such bad conditions?

Suhakam's study, which I wrote about in my last post ([link](#)), was a response to complaints it received about deaths in custody. The study began in 2014. The report was published in 2016.

The study was conducted in six stages. The fifth stage, lasting 2 months, was for the police to recommend actions.

During the study period, there were 486 active lockups. The study team made observations in 47 police stations and lockups, in West and East Malaysia. They interviewed 373 detainees, 129 sentries, 275 Investigation Officers (IO) or Assistant IOs' and 46 officers in charge of stations.

Here, I'll summarize what they wrote in chapter six, which is titled "Duties and welfare of PDRM officers and personnel: observations."

Police buildings.

In Klang Utara (Kapar), evidence was insecurely stored in the shophouses which served as offices. IPD Pasir Mas was often flooded. IPD Kuching's septic tank overflowed during heavy rain. IPD Shah Alam's air-conditioning system had been out of order for two months, and two of three lifts were not working. IPD Travers (KL), though relatively new, had an out of order lift and the lockup was unusable since it did not comply with fire standards. The Johor Bahru Selatan Police District Headquarters (IPD) was in a British era building; offices were across the road, and this put officers and documents in jeopardy.

IOs' Offices. In some stations, officers used their own money to buy or repair office equipment ranging from chairs to computers. They paid for purchase, installation and repair of air conditioners. They bought paper and toner with their own money. They rented photocopiers with their own money. Confidential files could be seen by the public. Carpets were worn out. Sometimes officers pooled their money to buy a carpet. Many officers shared the same room, even males and females. IOs' used the same toilets as suspects. Some offices were in shophouses, outside the compounds of the police stations. Some officers were so embarrassed about their offices, they refused to allow them to be photographed.

Interrogation rooms and Suspect Identification Rooms.

Some rooms doubled up as suspect identification rooms (what? No one-way mirrors?). The air-conditioning wasn't working in several of them. Installed CCTV's had never worked in some of them and weren't present in others. Of the interrogation room in IPD Pasir Mas, the authors wrote: "The room is seen unsuitable to be used as interrogation room or occupied by any officer, and personnel/staff." Some stations did not have suspect identification rooms, so identification line-ups were done in interrogation rooms. This jeopardized the safety of all present.

Vehicles.

There was a shortage of vehicles. Those which were available were often in a poor state of repair. "Sometimes the officers and personnel repair the vehicles with their own money to avoid any inconvenience when carrying out their tasks." Officers and other personnel often used their own vehicles for official business, paying for petrol and tolls out of their own pockets. Some officers used their own vehicles to transport arrestees.

Other facilities.

Many stations didn't have enough female IOs and AIOs, so it was hard for the station to handle crimes involving female suspects. The computerized Police Reporting System could only be accessed from within the offices. Many stations didn't have rooms to store seized items which could be used as exhibits during trials in court. "Most of the exhibits are placed in space at the back of station and it is overcrowded with numbers of items and the exhibits have to be placed in an exposed station space (Figure 42)." Many IO and AIO offices didn't have phone lines. Some stations did not have rooms for lawyers to meet their clients. There weren't enough crime scene photographers and IOs.

Work force planning.

One third of 271 active IOs and AIOs interviewed said they had not received any special training in how to conduct interrogations. "The Commission found ... they are not continuously developed after being involved in the service." Over half of IOs and AIOs said they managed

16-20 cases each over six months. (I cannot reconcile this with a parliamentary answer of the Home Minister which indicates an average of 100 people are sent to lockups every hour.) They spent over three hours per day conducting interrogations. Much of their time was spent on security and traffic control operations, often involving dignitaries. They attended court hearings too. Some stations had no officers to deal with sexual offences. Some had no detectives. Some were overwhelmed with narcotics cases. Some older officers had serious health problems. Officers and personnel believed they were often exposed to suspects with contagious diseases. Suspects were not screened for infectious diseases prior to admission into lockups. Two thirds of those interviewed said they experienced work stress.

Housing.

Officers and personnel often couldn't afford to rent suitable housing. Those who were provided with housing had to cope with poor maintenance such as leakages, broken lifts, bad odours and lack of security (police personnel are often targeted by persons they investigate).

In a word, the study found that work conditions in the police force were appalling! Is it any wonder that officers aren't punished for deaths in custody? Police management probably think officers' actions and inactions which result in deaths cannot be assigned to individual officers, since the infrastructure and systems are so broken and officers are so stressed out.

I can't help recalling the management aphorism "85% of problems are caused by management." What has changed in the five years since the report was issued? Who will answer? Home Minister Hamzah Zainudin? The Police Force Commission? The Inspector General of Police?

Don't our men in blue deserve better? If you care, you can share.

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<https://write2rest.blogspot.com/2021/05/5-years-ago-conditions-in-pdrm-were.html>

5 years ago, conditions in PDRM were appalling. Has anything changed?

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