

Using technology to reduce crime

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THE results of National Key Results Area (NKRA) for crime have been outstanding for the first quarter and what the police (PDRM) and the Home Ministry had done in the first quarter of 2010 has been nothing short of exceptional.

The crime index has been reduced by 15.1% and street crimes dropped by 39.6% over the first four months, compared with the same period last year. Some may argue that these are mere statistics and that there are still prevalent crimes happening all over the country. However, these are early days of the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) in its crime prevention measures.

The main focus was to identify the 50 hot spots nationwide and to quickly work towards reducing the level of high incidence of crime in these areas. To that end, this has achieved significant results.

Despite the success, the government recognises that the crime rate has to be reduced further and on an even larger scale. One of the plans under the GTP is implementing the Safe City Monitoring System, which will see the installation of closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs).

As part of the crime NKRA initiatives, a further 500 CCTVs

would be installed by year end at all crime hotspots.

Many have debated that CCTVs only act as mere deterrents and are proven to be effective only if they are monitored and the police are able to respond to them immediately. They do

not actually prevent crimes from taking place. This is because the recordings are viewed only after the crimes have been committed.

Yet public security still wins hands down as there is no doubt that having cameras in public places will help identify the criminals.

In the case of the London 7 July 2008 bombings, the suspects were identified through CCTV recordings, despite the damage having already been done and scores of lives lost. But this is where CCTVs are able to assist in investigations, in providing evidence and assist in the conviction of the culprits.

As for now, Cyberjaya is the only town which has fully implemented the CCTV-MERS 99 – a pioneer project under Cyberjaya's M-SAFE programme via the Safe Township concept and it has been proven that the town has managed to reduce its crime rates significantly.

Its response time is even half of



the national response time – eight minutes. With this record, the Home Ministry and PDRM are sure the installation of CCTVs accompanied by the proper follow up requirements will reduce the crime rate.

Police agree that CCTVs make it easier to

identify culprits and in cases like kidnappings and robberies where CCTVs are monitored, police are able to act swiftly and in many cases, nab the culprits before they do further damage.

Crime analyst Kamal Effendi who is with the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation, said CCTVs have been proven to decrease crime rates as it can form a sense of security – something akin to Big Brother watching.

“What we have now are passive CCTVs and this does to a certain extent act as a deterrent. What would help most would be active CCTVs which are monitored 24/7 with speakers,” said Kamal.

Under the GTP, the installation of CCTVs in public places to enhance security will be implemented with cooperation from local authorities.

All in all, 12 town and city councils in Klang Valley, Penang, Malacca and Johor will work with the police in



Private companies normally have CCTVs to monitor their employees.

ensuring there are CCTVs installed and maintained in strategic public places.

For example, in Bukit Bintang, cameras are connected to the police operations room and activities in that area monitored 24 hours a day.

Cameras are installed and maintained by KL City Hall and linked to KL police.

Kamal agrees that Malaysia would be able to cut down crime rates by having CCTVs in public places provided the cameras installed have good resolutions, images captured are clear and the CCTVs are placed at strategic places. “The response time is also important,” he says.

It has been reported that police can react in less than 12 minutes to a crime scene particularly if it happens in KL.

If the monitoring system is

operational by December 2010, it will demonstrate a quantum leap for the police as it means moving beyond the current Police Reporting System.

Police now use “pin map” for mapping of crime locations spatially. The value of crime mapping to police work is enormous; and local authorities stand to improve coordination with the collective initiatives of other agencies.

According to the Safe City Programme, hotspots have been identified by the 12 town and city councils – and 21% of them have started implementing the programme.

The Home Ministry is now working with local authorities to use CCTVs all over the country. Perhaps the private sector can now develop a CSR programme to complement the ministry's effort.