

Uniform blues



SUNDAY STAR 18/07/2010 PAGE 41

Police want other outfits to stop using their 'colours'

PETALING JAYA: Who's the man in blue? In Malaysia, it can be a policeman or an officer from the Customs, Immigration, Road Transport or Prisons Department.

Or it could be the municipal council enforcement officer who issues you a parking summons, a security officer at the airport or a guard at a shopping mall.

While police in most countries are distinguished by the traditional dark blue uniform, the Malaysian police force still has no such exclusive right.

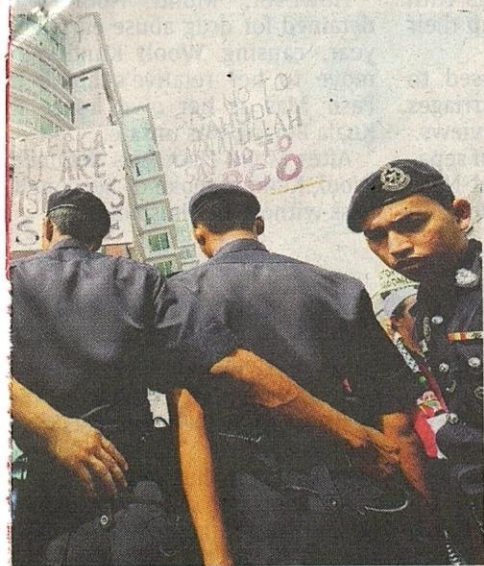
> FEDERAL police deputy director of manage-

ment (training) Datuk Mortadza Nazarene says the integrity of the force is at stake because the police have been unfairly accused of offences committed by others;

> THE police now want to gazette the colour and design of their uniform to solve the confusion; and

> THE Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation supports the move as it will help the public distinguish the cops from other uniformed personnel.

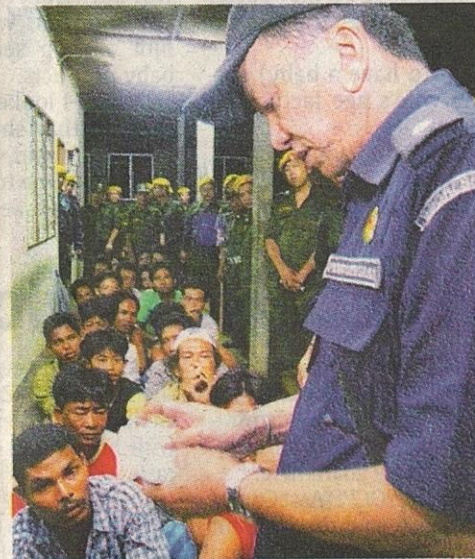
> SEE N4 AND F17-18



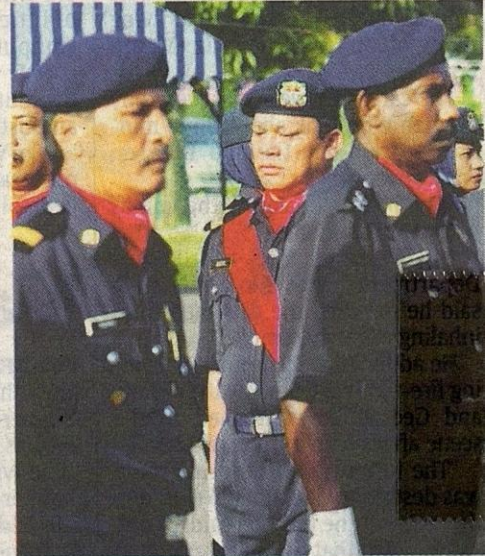
Police



Customs



Immigration



Penang Municipal Council (MPPP)

SUNDAY STAR 18/10/2010 N4

Police singing the blues over similar uniforms

By RASHVINJEET S. BEDI
sunday@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Telling a policeman apart from other uniformed officers is not easy these days; the Customs, Immigration, Road Transport and Prisons departments have similar uniforms.

To add to the confusion, enforcement officers from some municipal councils and those hired by security firms also wear dark blue uniforms.

The police are concerned as the public might not be able to tell the difference, said Federal police deputy director of management

(training) Datuk Mortadza Nazarene.

"The integrity of the force is at stake. It is an issue. We want to be different from the rest," he said.

Mortadza said they had received complaints from the public about police abuse but upon investigation, found that these "men in blue" were actually from local councils, other agencies or the private sector.

Mortadza said they were now gazetting the police uniform so that they could have exclusive rights to its use.

Selangor police chief Deputy Comm Datuk Khalid Abu Bakar concurred.

Khalid recalled a recent incident where the

police were accused of assault, but investigations revealed that those involved were actually security guards from a supermarket.

Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) vice-chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said the issue of similar uniforms could pose a problem.

Lee said it was only right that the police gazetted their uniforms.

Meanwhile, a check by *Sunday Star* found that while police uniforms are not openly sold, one can easily buy fake police badges, stick-on signs with the word "POLIS", detective jackets and even handcuffs.

An informal survey found that most people

could not tell the difference between the real paraphernalia and the fake ones.

Mortadza warned shops against selling such badges and any other items associated with the police.

"Anyone in possession of these items can be charged," he said.

He added that there had been cases of police impostors and advised those stopped by uniformed personnel to ask for their authority cards to ensure they were genuine cops.

▶ See Focus F17

Feeding on fear of cops

Feeding on fear of cops

Whenever we encounter the police, we freeze and think that we have done something wrong. Crooks who impersonate our law enforcers play on this fear.

Sunday 18/07/2010 PAGE F17

By RASHVINJEET S.BEDI
sunday@thestar.com.my

PAUL Jambunathan remembers talking on his mobile phone while crossing the road one day. He saw a police car passing by and automatically put his phone down.

He was not committing any crime; he just thought he was.

Jambunathan, a clinical psychologist, attributes this reflex action to a case of classical conditioning.

"Most people associate the police with punishing us for doing something wrong (although we haven't)," he says.

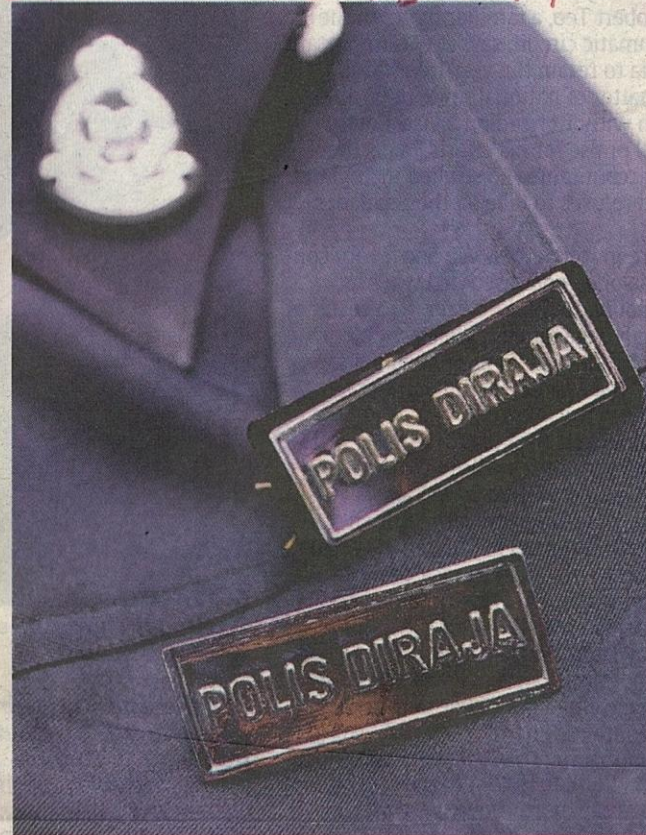
Billy Lim* has a similar story. He admits to always talking on the phone while driving. A few times, he has caught sight of someone in a fluorescent jacket similar to those used by the police, and he ended up panicking.

"Very often it turns out to be someone from the local council or even a road construction worker," he says. But the sight of the vest is enough to give him the chills.

Unfortunately, criminals who impersonate the police or other enforcement agencies work on this fear, says Jambunathan.



Which one is real?: A police badge purchased at Pertama Complex. The fake badge is at the bottom. It is hard for the layman to tell the difference between the two badges.



Similar badges: There is little difference between the police shoulder tag purchased at Pertama Complex (bottom) and one found on a policeman's uniform.

this fear, says Jambunathan.

Over the years, there have been cases of people impersonating police officers, which is a crime under the Police Act.

Impostors have used the police uniform to commit robberies, extortion and even rape.

"Even when I see the words POLIS, I become nervous for no reason. It could even be someone wearing a plain T-shirt with the

word POLIS on the back," says Lim.

MCA Public Services and Complaints Department head Datuk Michael Chong agrees that the public may not be able to tell the difference between a genuine police officer and a bogus one.

"If they stop, they might get robbed but if they don't, they might get shot," he observes.

He says that it is easy to impersonate an enforcement agency with numerous shops selling uniforms and paraphernalia of all these enforcement agencies, including the police.

"The only thing I can't buy is a gun. Even then, I can get a toy gun. If I stand by the roadside

> **TURN TO PAGE 18**

Police accessories sold openly

TO become a police officer, one needs to undergo vigorous training. However, it is possible for one to look like a cop - for a few hundred ringgit!

Accessories for police uniforms are available in some stores in and around the city. At Pertama Complex in Kuala Lumpur, for example, I easily obtained a few of the items, and at a discount too.

At one store, I purchased two police badges and a sticker with the word POLIS in bold letters (to be stuck on the back of a jacket or vest). The shop also stocked badges of other enforcement agencies such as the Prisons Department.

I asked for a receipt and the shopkeeper told me to write down my name and police iden-

tification number. When I told him I was not a policeman, he looked worried and said he was not permitted to sell the items to civilians. But I managed to convince him the items were for personal use only. I paid RM35 for the three items.

Next, I went to a uniforms wholesaler and was able to buy a Road Transport Department (RTD) emblem, twin army medals and a pair of police shoulder badges for RM37.

The shop assistants said people usually bought the badges in bulk and were surprised I was only buying one of each. But they did not ask any further questions after I said the items for personal use only.

At another shop, I bought a

police integrity badge for RM11.90. I also noticed that handcuffs were available there for RM28 and RM58. The more expensive cuffs were of higher quality and had double locks, the attendant assured me. She seemed more than happy to sell me the handcuffs until I asked if it was legal to buy them. Only then did she ask for a letter of authority.

Police uniforms, however, were more difficult to get compared to army and Rela uniforms, which are easily purchased from any uniform shop.

When I asked about getting the police uniform at one shop, I was told that I would need a letter of authority from Bukit Aman.

— **By RASHVINJEET S.BEDI**

What to do when approached by policeman

POLICE STOP YOU

1. Not in uniform, ask for identification

> Say: "Please, show me your Police authority card."

> Police authority card

- **Red** : Suspended police officer. He has no authority to do anything to you. Walk away
- **Blue** : Rank of inspector and above
- **Yellow** : Below the rank of inspector
- **White** : Reserve police

> Note his name and police authority card number

2. In uniform

> Note his name and ID number on his uniform

> Police vehicle

> Note the number plate of the patrol car or motorcycle



POLICE QUESTION YOU WHEN STOPPED

1. Your identification

> Only give your name, ID card number and address

2. The police ask other questions

> Politely ask, "Am I under arrest?"

3. When you are under arrest

> You are arrested if the Police:

- tell you "yes";
- do not allow you to leave/want to take you to the Police Station; or,
- handcuff you

4. If you are not under arrest, you may walk away

For more information about your rights when approached by the police, see Malaysian Bar's booklet titled "Police and Your Basic Rights", also known as the "Red Book" at this website at www.malaysianbar.org.my.

Impersonation a matter of grave concern

SUNDAY STAR 18 10 7 2010 PAGE F18

> FROM PAGE 17

wearing the uniform, some people would not be able to tell the difference," says Chong.

He adds that anyone can buy Rela (Volunteers of Malaysian People) outfits complete with their rank.

Rela officers are often called up for crime-prevention duties and they have the power to make a citizen's arrest and hand the perpetrator over to the authorities. They can also check identity cards and passports, and nab illegal immigrants.

The easy availability of Rela uniforms in shops and online has made it easy for crooks to impersonate its volunteers to commit crimes.

In 2006, robbers masquerading as Rela

members drove off with RM47mil worth of microchips from the air cargo complex in Penang.

Major Jen Datuk Abdul Aziz Ibrahim, the assistant chief of staff, Personal Services of the Royal Malaysian Armed Force (RMAF), says there have been many cases of people misusing the army uniform.

One of the main reasons is to get the attention of girls, says Abdul Aziz.

"It is impossible to stop the shops from selling the uniforms as they have valid business licences."

Mary Chan* recalls a uniform theme party that was organised by her company. She says that most people were dressed in army fatigues. She herself wore a police uniform she had ordered on the Internet.

"My uniform was quite plain and anyone could tell it was fake. But the army uniform of the others looked real," she says.

Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) vice-chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye agrees that impersonation of police and other government security personnel is an issue of concern.

The MCPF has received some complaints of impersonations of police personnel, he acknowledges.

He says the Government should take note of the problem and check outlets that sell these uniforms and paraphernalia freely.

"This problem has existed for quite a while. The sale of these items should be tightened to prevent abuse," he warns.

Lee says the police should educate the pub-

lic on what to do when confronted by impostors.

The police have always reminded people to ask for authority cards when they are sceptical about the status of the uniformed man.

But not many people do that, unfortunately. Emily Abdullah says she would not be able to tell the difference between an impersonator and a real police officer. She has been stopped at police road blocks but has never asked to see their identification.

"Not that it never occurs to me but I just want to get everything over with as quickly as possible," she says.

Jambunathan says it is the public's right to ask for identification and they have to let go of the misconception that the police would be antagonistic if they do so.