



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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CAP DEMANDS INQUIRY ON FIREARM INCIDENTS AND SMUGGLING

CAP is utterly shocked and disgusted by the news of people being ruthlessly gunned down, now being more frequent. As such CAP is demanding the government to set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) to inquire into and recommend measures to curb firearm incidents in the country.

It appeared that the number of shooting cases had also escalated in recent months and some of the prominent cases were:

- On 15 June, a businessman was shot dead in his car just after the Sungai Rasau toll plaza, Shah Alam.
- On 21 June, a PKR politician Bill Kayong was shot in the neck as he stopped his pick-up truck at the traffic light junction in Lutong, north of Miri city.
- On 6 July, a female real estate agent was shot dead and her daughter injured in a shooting incident at Taman OUG, Kuala Lumpur.
- On 13 July, a man high on drugs allegedly shot his mother, brother, his two-year-old nephew and his mother's boyfriend with a 9mm semi-automatic pistol in Batu Maung, Penang.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, in a Dewan Rakyat written reply, stated that 89,771 Malaysians have been issued licenses for rifles to stun guns as of 31 December last year.

Most of the licenses (63,145) were for shotguns and pump-action shotguns (7,731). Of the remaining licenses, 12,917 were for pistols; 1,789, revolvers; 2,243, rifles; and another 1,946 licences were for others such as flag-off pistols, blank guns, spear guns, nail guns and stun guns.

We may not even know the estimates of illegal firearms as it was admitted in other reports that they were smuggled through 200 known 'lorong tikus' or hidden entry points along Malaysia's porous border. Malaysia has land borders with Brunei, Indonesia, and Thailand measuring a total of 2,742 km.

According to a 2016 news report, prices of smuggled firearms ranged between RM1,500 and RM5,000 depending on their model and they can be obtained from syndicates operating in nearby Danok or Haatyai and Bangkok. Most of the firearms were believed to be sourced from the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia, smuggled in parts by different people and put them together once successfully crossed the border.

Currently the firearm smuggling preventive measures available under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act, Dangerous Drugs Act (Preventive Measures) and Penal Code did not seem to dampen the activity.

Right now it appears like hiring a hitman is as easy as engaging a plumber to fix a leaking water pipe and even acquiring a firearm seemed easy too as from the number of reports we read from the media.

It was claimed that about 80 per cent of the hitmen were foreigners who charged a fee of between RM5,000 and RM100,000 and they would return to their home country within hours of executing their crime.

It is of course good that the Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar announced the establishment of a special task force by the police on 10 July 2016 to deal with the escalating number of shooting cases nationwide. He cited two measures being taken currently:

- Police operations such as ‘Ops Cantas’ and close monitoring of border and entry points helped curb gun-smuggling activities.
- Enforcement agencies, particularly those in the coastal areas, working closely with their neighbouring counterparts to check smuggling activities. This cooperation extended to an exchange of intelligence.

Meanwhile, CAP applauds the establishment of the Border Security Agency (Aksem) in November 2015. It is manned by about 10,000 officials from the armed forces, the police, General Operations Force and the Smuggling Prevention Unit. However, CAP is concerned about where the priority of Aksem is placed: in preventing an annual loss of more than RM2 billion through smuggling activities or the smuggling of firearms.

It is also hoped that Aksem will be able to restore the image of Malaysia after *The Diplomat* (28 July 2015) reported: “Last month (i.e. June 2015), Malaysia’s police intelligence agency noted in a report compiled over ten years that a startling 80 percent of law enforcement officers in Malaysia’s borders were corrupt, with many of them directly involved in smuggling drugs, weapons and people.”

In conclusion, CAP is of the opinion that the institution of Royal Commission of Inquiry is more appropriate than a taskforce to address such worrying trend that is in dire need to have viable and long-term solutions. While calling for the Royal Commission of Inquiry, the government can seriously consider reviving Rukun Tetangga (Neighbourhood Watch) as a step in engaging the community.

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