

## **JAPANESE POLICE : A MODEL IN COMMUNITY POLICING**

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In one of the latest, authentic studies on community policing carried by Jeromo H.Skolnic and David H.Bayley, published in May 1988 through U.S. Department of Justice, the Japanese police system has been described to be the “oldest and the best established community policing system in the world”. The conclusion has surprised some of the Japanese police officers, or atleast they said so in their inimitable modest style of acknowledging praises. The new Japanese police system was set up following the IIInd World War, out of a combination of the traditional Japanese culture which these people hold fast and the American democratic ideals which they have adopted. In Japan, the community policing evolved naturally, long before this concept gained popularity and almost became a fashion elsewhere.

The U.S. Department study has covered 10 countries, including Australia, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Japan, Singapore and the United States and found ‘the most ambitious, and extensive neighbourhood crime prevention programme in Japan’, though it is not called ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ as in the US and some other countries. The community policing in Canada has been found to be powerful and well programmed but halting’, in Great Britain, “a patch work of programmes unguided by any coherent strategic vision’, and in USA, ‘more often aspirations than implementation’. Singapore has been considered to be the ‘best show case of the new policing in the world, field tested and evolved before implementing the Japanese Koban system of policing’. In Singapore, they decided to substitute a neighbourhood police post for ‘the old mobile re-active model inherited from the British’.

Community policing today is found to be the popular band wagon, being the latest and the most progressive concept. But the experiments often lack in substance and they are more in the appearances than reality. It has, no doubt, strong emotional appeal to the public but in the majority of cases the neighbourhood watch and community policing does not measure up the matching operational practics, and the old concept of ‘professional policeman’ is firmly entrenched while the public is (subconsciously) kept away. The street cop refuses to convert, the police innovations in most of the advanced countries have not taken roots on account of the street cop resistance. The success of the Japanese system lies in the acceptance of the concept of community policing at the level of the street petrol.

### **ROLE OF JAPANESE POLICE:**

### **HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT:**

Historically, a police bureau (Keihoriya) supervised police in Japan which remained centralised under the Ministry of Home Affairs from 1874 to 1945, i.e. till the end of world war II. In 1948, the pre-war police system was reformed, decentralising the police authority and turned it into a democratic force. The police duties were, however, limited to police functions, and the activities like fire fighting, health and sanitation were transferred to other administrative agencies. The public safety commission system was adopted at the national and pre-fectural levels as a democratic control on

police, and the police organisation was divided into two categories i.e Municipal police, for the towns over 5000 of population and rest of the places under national rural police.

The foundations of democratic policing was laid but the dual system of rural and municipal policing was found to be irrational and uneconomical and it also placed financial burden on the people. As a result, in 1954, the new police law was promulgated. The law corrected the defects under the old system while retaining its democratic character. The national and prefectural public safety commissions were retained to ensure the popular control while maintaining the political neutrality of the police. The national and the prefectural police has coalesced into a cohesive force and the police activities in Japan are today firmly rooted on the solid foundations of popular confidence.

The role of police in Japan is well defined in article 2 of the police Law, 1954. It is to protect life, person and property of individuals, take them in charge, preventing, investigating and suppressing crimes, apprehending the suspects, investigating crimes, traffic control and other affairs concerning the maintenance of safety and order. To discharge these duties the police are engaged in various activities of which the crime control and the maintenance of public peace and order are considered to be the most important functions.

Article 189 of the Criminal Procedure designates a police official as a 'Judicial Police Official', who does not limit himself in the matters of investigation. He investigates all kinds of offences including the crimes and infringements punishable under all types of laws. The public prosecutor is, however, also empowered to investigate, following the police investigation.

The police performs wide range of administrative functions relating to road traffic, such as, issue and cancellation of traffic licences, imposition of punishments in certain matters relating to traffic violations besides regulating traffic, setting up traffic lanes and control, issue public permits for road use, supervising traffic safety programmes. They also control business affecting the 'Public morals' such as, places of entertainment, bars, night-clubs and control of illegal activities. They run 'Juvenile guidance Committee system'. The Police grants sanction to security companies for protection of security services, guides them in training and management, they control pawn brokers' business, antiques and curios. They control the possession of Firearms and swords, oversee their safe keeping and regulate licences. They also administer 'Crime Victims Benefit Payment Law'. In all these areas of activity the police stations and patrol agencies play a vital role.

### **POLICE ORGANISATION:**

The National Public Safety Commission which controls the Japanese police functions under the Prime Minister of Japan who is not authorised to command and give orders to the commission. The commission administers matters concerning police education, police communication, criminal identification, criminal statistics, police equipments and co-ordination of police management.

The Commission is constituted by a chairman, a Minister of State, and 5 members, appointed by the Prime Minister with the approval of the house of representatives and the house of councilors. The commission members are chosen for 5 years from among the persons who have not been in public service or prosecution in the preceding five years. The National Public Safety Commission administers the national police agency, the word "administer" is interpreted as setting basic policies

and guiding the N.P.A. to conduct police affairs in accordance with that policy, and it does not include the supervision of the details of the agency work.

## **NATIONAL POLICE AGENCY**

The National Police Agency is headed by the Commissioner General, who may or may not be a police officer. He is appointed and dismissed by the N.P.S. Commission with the approval of the Prime Minister. The Commissioner General administers the NPA, appoints and dismisses its employees, and supervises prefectural police forces regarding matters under the agency.

N.P.A. has a secretariat besides police administration Bureau, criminal investigation bureau, traffic bureau, communication bureau and a safety department attached to the criminal investigation bureau. The N.P.A. broadly performs the duties relating to planning and the research of various systems, national budget relating to police, police operations, in large scale disasters and disturbances affecting public peace and order at national level, traffic control on high-ways, international investigations, Imperials Guards, Police educational institutions, police communication facilities, criminal identification facilities, criminal statistics, police equipments, standard of police recruitment, duties and activities and the activities relating to National Police Commission.

There are 7 regional police bureaux in the Principal cities throughout the country except in Tokyo and Hokkaido. The Director of a regional bureau supervises the police personnel under him and also supervises the prefectural police under the directions of the Commissioner General of N.P.A.

The National Police Academy, the National Research Institute of police science and Imperial Guard Force are attached to the National Police agency.

## **ORGANISATION OF PREFECTURAL POLICE**

Japan is divided in 47 prefectures and each prefecture maintains its own single police force to deal with crimes and matters relating to public peace and order in that prefecture. Each prefecture has a public safety commission as the administrative organ to administer the prefectural police. The prefectural public safety commission is placed under the jurisdiction of the Governor, who is not authorised to supervise the commission. The commission, in turn, formulates the basic policies for operation of the force but does not supervise the details of its work. The commission is made up of five members in larger prefectures and 3 in the smaller, chosen from among the residents of the prefectures for a period of three years by the Governor on the same qualifications as the members of National Commission.

## **POLICE FORCE IN JAPAN**

The total strength of Japan Police in 1986 was 2,56,000 which included 1200 Police Officers 900 Imperial Guards and 5500 civilian staff, with National Police Agency accounting for 7600 personnel. The 47 prefectural police force had a total strength of 249000 of which 2,19,000 are police officers and 30,000 civilian personnel. There were 4100 women police, 12000 civilian staff, 2800 traffic, guidance personnel (They included personnel involved in juvenile guidance through out the

country). The Police population ratio in Japan is 1 to 550 citizens which is much lower to the average ratio in a number of Western countries.

## **RANKS**

There are 9 ranks in police i.e. (I) Superintendent General of Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department (ii) Superintendent Supervisor (Prefectural Head) (iii) Chief Superintendent (iv) Sr. Superintendent (v) Superintendent (vi) Police Inspector (vii) Assistant Police Inspector (viii) Police Sergeant and (ix) Policeman. The Commissioner General of N.P.S. holds the highest position in the police hierarchy but he does not hold a police rank. Besides the above ranks there is a post of Sr. Policeman, a rank awarded to policeman with experience.

Most of the promotions in police are given on the basis of examinations, but, experience, knowledge and service record is given due weightage. The police emoluments are generally comparable to other public service personnel, but they are paid 10% higher than the other public services. Additional allowances are given for crime investigation, traffic control and for driving a petrol car which are considered to be 'dangerous, unpleasant and detrimental to health'.

## **POLICE BUDGET AND EQUIPMENT**

The national police agency and the prefectural police have their respective budgets. However, National budget covers part of the prefectural expenditure. In 1985 the National police agency budget was 161 billion yen, the personnel expenses being 65 billions, National Police Agency covering 115 billions, equipment communications and facilities being 23 billions subsidies for prefectural police being 45 billions and other expenses being 27 billion yens. The total prefectural police budget in 1985 was 2017 billion yen, 82.3% of expenses being on personnel and 17.3 percent on non personnel matters.

Japanese police has 20,000 vehicles including 5000 petrol cars, 3000 motor cycles, 5000 cars for investigative operations and 2600 transport vehicles. They have 200 police beats and 44 helicopters, 32 being based in prefectures, 9 in Tokyo and 3 in other places.

## **POLICE PATROL ACTIVITIES**

Safety department is one of the agencies of the criminal investigation bureau, under the N.P.A., and it covers crime prevention division, juvenile division, safety division, living and economic division and petrol division. The police petrol activities are by far the most important section of Japanese police. The petrol police remains engaged round the clock in the activities related to the day-to-day life of the community. It includes traffic guidance and control, prevention of crimes, lost and run away children, control juvenile guidance, listening to the problems of the people and giving them advice, street directions, prevention of crime and apprehension of suspects. Through these activities the Japanese Police ensures public peace and security and generates goodwill between the people and the police. Petrol activities are considered to be the foundation of police work in Japan.

## **POLICE BOXES:**

Police boxes, both residential and non-residential, coupled with radio petrol cars are the active units of the police petrol system. Non residential police boxes (HASHUTSUSHO) are mostly located in urban areas and residential police boxes (CHUZAISHO) in non urban areas i.e. Villages. Ordinarily, three or more petrol officers work in three shifts in residential police boxes, and one petrol officer with his family lives in the residential police box and performs his duties. The police consorts who perform some duties on the police boxes are paid suitable allowances. The three-shift system duty for a petrol officer means a duty cycle, i.e. full day duty from 8.30 A.M. to 8.30 A.M. next day with 24 hour off followed by a day duty from 8.30 A.M. to 5.15 P.M. On the third day. There are 6000 non residential police posts and 9000 residential police posts in Japan.

Radio petrol cars are deployed by prefectural police Headquarters and Police Stations and they carry out routine patrol and watch duties. They remain in constant radio contact with the communication centres of the prefectural police Headquarters and the C.C.C. of Metropolitan Police Department Tokyo, in order to rush to the scene of incident without any delay.

The Police boxes are responsible for handling any incident in their respective areas which may include lost and found persons and property, petitions, complaints and requests of all types, public consultations and street directions. Petrol activities in the assigned areas are carried on foot, bicycles and radio cars in order to prevent crimes and arrest suspects. Petrol officers question the suspicious persons on their routine rounds. About 74.6 percent of criminals arrested in 1985 were apprehended by the petrol police. The officers on police posts visit homes, factories and business houses within their territories to advise them on prevention of crimes and accidents, to listen to their requests and to help them in any trouble or problems. They also visit the homes of the aged persons living alone, invalid and physically handicapped persons. The patrol officers help such people on day to day basis and generally advise people against crimes and disasters and prepare them for emergencies. Police posts often publish brief bulletins named after places and scenic spots in the locality. This bulletin could carry information about traffic accidents, thefts, lost property, good work done by children. In 1986, 1400 police posts published such bulletins which were found to be very popular. The petrol officers guide youths, in various sports such as Judo, Kendo and Aikido, promoting close contacts between the police and the youths.

### **EMERGENCY CALLS AND SERVICES: DIAL 110**

All over Japan 'Dial 110' i.e. emergency calls, has become very popular and the number of emergency calls has been increasing every year. In 1986, this number was 3,572,680 which works out to be one emergency call every 8.9 seconds and 1 for every 34 people. The emergency calls' peak was found to be between 6 to 8 PM and 12 Midnight. They related to reports on traffic accidents and violations (33%) general information (13.2%) enquiries of all types (10%), protection of drunks (49%), fighting and disputes ( 4 to 3%), injury to sick (10%) follow up tips (11.3%), requests and complaints, (5 to 8%) etc. 'Dial 110' has become a strong bond between the police and the people and it has a firm hold in the every day life of the community. The Communication Command Officer i.e. the Senior Most Officer in the Control Room, specialises in giving accurate and quick instructions to petrol Cars, Police Stations and petrol officers on each call. Apart from the Tokyo police Communication Command Centre the prefectural Communication Command Centres (110) have also the latest electronic equipmently.

## CONTROL ON CRIMES:

It is a tribute to Japanese Police that inspite of free registration of cases, the crime rates have been coming down. The total number of penal offences in Japan, in 1985, was a,600000 cases, excluding the cases of negligence in traffic accidents. The crime rate, which was showing an upward trend in and after 1979, was about 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the 1984 rate, in 1985. The felonious crimes, such as, murder and robbery showed a decrees of 70 percent in 1985 over 1948 figures. Compared to the US, Britain, Germany, the crime rates in Japan is extremely low. The clearance rate of cases in Japan was the highest i.e. 97.2 percent compared to three western countries, and the same trend was observed under other categories of crimes. According to the official reports of Japanese police some of the reasons for low crimes and high standard of public order in Japan are its heterogeneous culture, its being an Island country, high level of education, low rate of unemployment and little gap between the poor and rich, strong control over guns and drugs and, last but not least, deep sense of public trust in the police and willing support in criminal investigation.

However certain types of crimes have been found increasing in Japan and the organised activities of the anti-social groups such as Bakuto (professional gamblers) and Tokyo (Street entertainers).The organised racketeer groups called 'Boryokudan' are posing a serious threat to the law and order machinery. There are some 2000 gangs with 9,3500 members indulging in organised crimes such as gambling, drug trafficking and the night life crimes which may involve murders and other serious crimes. Generally, these criminal gangs and their activities do not disturb the police public understanding.

Much of the information in the foregoing paragraphs are drawn from the official reports of Japanese Police, and partly from the first hand observation. At times, there are gaps between the claims made and the actual performance. For instance, the petrol officers of the kobans are not able to visit the individual households very regularly, it may be once in several months. But, there is remarkable trust between the residents and the patrol officers. The kobans have an inviting atmosphere, and it is most common to see children flocking in and out the kobans, exchanging pleasantries, and the people talking to Petrol officers on insignificant things. A policeman is courteous to the fellow Japanese, at times more courteous than he is to the foreigners, and he interacts with the people, pleasantly and patiently. The Japanese Police are so different and often they appear to be unique also because the people of Japan are themselves like that. Police in that country is an honest reflection of the society and the people it serves - an observation which holds true of most of the police forces in the world.