CHAPTER III

THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE
NATIONAL REGISTRATION DEPARTMENT, MALAYSIA

This chapter provides the background information on the National Registration Department, Malaysia where this research is carried out. The chapter is divided into twelve topics concerning the organization. The topics are the historical background, the structure, the objectives, the functions, the missions and vision, jurisdiction and powers, innovation, recognition, shortcomings and constraints, future plans, the number of employees and service schemes, and training of employees.

3.1. **Historical Background**

The National Registration Department, Malaysia was established in October, 1948.1 In the same year, the Emergency Ordinance 1948 and Emergency (Registration Areas) Regulations, 1948 were enforced which required every residents of Peninsular Malaysia above the age of 12 years old to register and acquired an identity card.2 This move was a step to overcome the threat from the communists at that time as the issuance of identity cards to residents facilitated the relevant authorities to carried out security inspections on the population.3

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1 The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 5.
2 Ibid, p. 5.
3 Ibid, p. 5
From the year 1953 onwards, the Department was given full responsibilities to manage the registration of birth and death, and citizenship matters. During the subsequent years, the responsibilities and scope of duties of the Department were extended to include the registration of marriage and child adoption.

Some of the laws related to the responsibilities of the Department were already in existence before the Department was established. The earliest law was concerned with the registration of birth and death which was formulated and enforced in the Straits Settlement in 1869. The Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States also implemented this law in their states between the years 1886 and 1901 where the earliest implementation was in the state of Selangor. Before the tasks of birth and death registrations were placed on the Department, the responsibilities were that of the Health Department. In Sabah and Sarawak, the birth and death registration laws were enforced in the years 1884 and 1910 respectively.

As for the earliest local citizenship law, the Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1948 was enforced on the 1st of February, 1948.

5 Ibid, p. 5.
6 Ibid, p. 5.
7 Ibid, p. 5.
8 Ibid, p. 5.
9 Ibid, p. 10.
10 Ibid, p. 16.
3.2. **The Structure**

The National Registration Department is under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Department consists of the Head Office in Petaling Jaya, fifteen main branch at the state level, and branch offices at the district and sub-district levels.\(^{11}\) There are altogether 187 offices of the Department throughout the country which provide services to the public.\(^{12}\) The Head Office of the Department consists of eight divisions as mentioned below:\(^{13}\):

(a) The General Administration, Financial, Personnel and Development Division.

(b) The Birth, Death and Child Adoption Division.

(c) The Identity Card Division.

(d) The Citizenship Division

(e) The Marriage and Divorce Division.

(f) The Information System Services Division.

(g) The Investigation and Enforcement Division.

(h) The Coordination, Legal, Training and Internal Audit Division.

\(^{11}\) The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1996, p. 8-9.

\(^{12}\) Ibid, p. 8-9.

\(^{13}\) Ibid, p. 8-9.
The Administrative Head for the Department is the Director-General of National Registration and he is assisted by a Deputy Director-General of National Registration, eight Directors heading each of the divisions at the Head Office and fifteen Directors heading each of the state level office.\textsuperscript{14} The Director-General of National Registration holds the responsibility of managing the whole organization and performs the duties of the Registrar-General of Birth and Death, Registrar-General of Citizens, and Registrar-General of Marriage and Divorce.\textsuperscript{15} The organization chart of the Department is as shown in Figure 3.1.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{15} The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 8.
3.3. The Objectives

The objectives of the Department are to create and to maintain records on the total population of Malaysia, and to issue important certificates of registration concerning birth, death, child adoption, marriage, divorce, identity card and citizenship, for the purpose of providing security to the country and assisting the planning of its development.\textsuperscript{16} The people who receive services from the Department comprises of citizens, permanent residents and temporary residents of Malaysia.

3.4. The Functions

The functions\textsuperscript{17} of the Department are:-

(a) To collect, integrate and register important individual information on every individual in this country.

(b) To issue documents of registration to individuals in the form of Birth Certificates, Child Adoption Certificates, Death Certificates, Identity Cards, Citizenship Certificates and Marriage Certificates.

(c) To look after and guard important registration records safely, effectively and permanently.

\textsuperscript{16} The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1996, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 5.
(d) To enforce the provisions of relevant laws and regulations so that there are no breach of laws and regulations, and deviation from the proper course of action.

3.5. The Missions and Vision

3.5.1. Missions

The missions\textsuperscript{18} of the Department are to be responsible in providing good quality services to fulfil the demands of its customers and to act as the principal source of information on the population.

3.5.2. Vision

The vision\textsuperscript{19} of the Department is "moving together towards the achievement of excellence at the National Registration Department, Malaysia".

3.6. Jurisdiction and Powers

At present, the jurisdiction and powers\textsuperscript{20} of the Department are stipulated in the following Acts, Regulations and Rules:-

(a) The Registration of Birth and Death Act, 1957 (Peninsular Malaysia) including the rules.

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\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{20} The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 7.
(b) The Registration of Birth and Death Ordinance, 1948 (Cap. 123 Sabah) including the rules.

(c) The Registration of Birth and Death Ordinance 1951 (Cap. 10 Sarawak) including the rules.

(d) The Registration of Adoption Act, 1952 (Peninsular Malaysia) including the rules.

(e) The Registration of Adoption Ordinance, 1942 (Cap. 91 Sarawak) including the rules.

(f) The Adoption Ordinance No. 23/1960 (Sabah) including rules.


(h) The Marriage Registration Ordinance, 1952 including the rules


(j) Section III of the Federal constitution (on Citizenship) and Citizenship Rules, 1964.

(k) Fees Act, 1951

(l) Financial Procedure Act 1957.
3.7. **Innovation**

Innovation has been considered as an important factor that could ensure the success of reform efforts in the Public Services. In the past few years, the Department has introduced many innovations as a way to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and excellence in the Department. Some of the innovations introduced in the Department were:-

3.7.1. **High Security Cards (Identity Cards)**

In 1990, the new High Security Card (identity card with security features) was introduced by the Department to replace the plastic identity card issued previously. The purpose of the new identity card is to overcome various weaknesses found in the old plastic cards. The project was a part of the new computerized system of registering the country’s population known as the National Population Registration System implemented in the Department. Members of the public were given a period of six year until the end of 1996 to change their identity cards to the new form.

3.7.2. **Extensive Computerization Of Information**

Prior to the year 1989, computerization of information was already implemented in the Department but not extensively. The Department only started to computerize its information on an extensive scale from the year 1989 onwards. The first extensive computerization project carried out by the Department was the

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22 The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 17-18.
23 The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 27-28 and the Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1996, p. 32-33.
National Population Registration System which forms the basis of the High Security Card production process. The Department installed the IBM 3090 model 150S with the memory of 32MB and the storage capacity of 28 GB to facilitate the implementation of the project.

In the following years, various improvements were made to the computer system where in 1992, the system was extended by the installation of terminals to the Immigration Department to facilitate the checking of information. In 1993, the system was upgraded by the installation of IBM 3090 model 170T with a memory of 64MB and storage capacity of 43GB to cope with the increase in data inputs and to ensure optimal response time for the users. In 1994, the computer system linkages were extended to the National Registration Department offices in Sabah and Sarawak to facilitate the checking of information and the updating of data. In 1995, the computer system was further upgraded by increasing the storage capacity by 99GB. In the same year the registration of birth off-line system was also implemented at twenty five hospitals and the complete system linkages were extended to twelve of the Department’s state level offices in Peninsular Malaysia and the Department’s office in Labuan.

Under the Seventh Malaysia Plan, the Department continues its activities planned for the High Security Card project and the focus are on birth, death and child adoption activities, identity card activities, citizenship activities and marriage and adoption activities. The project is characterized by an integrated system where
all the department's offices can reach one another directly to share information, cross-reference, and to check data speedily and effectively. The system can ensure the security of information by preventing intrusion into the system and limiting the accesses to the data system.

The implementation of the project under the Seventh Malaysia Plan will be in two phases. The first phase is from 1996 until 1999, involving 72 offices of the Department including the Head office. The second phase will be from the year 2000 until the year 2001 where the project will be implemented at 115 offices of the Department. Under this project, the branch offices of the Department will be able to have accesses to the data and images from the data base at the Head Office.

3.7.3. Revision of Forms for Citizenship Applications\textsuperscript{24}

In 1966, new forms for citizenship applications were introduced by the Department. Previously, there were seven types of application forms for citizenship under different articles of Malaysia's Constitutions. There are now only three types of application forms where two types of forms are for applications of citizenship by registration while the other type is for application of citizenship by naturalization.

3.7.4. Launching of Infolink\textsuperscript{25}

The Department launched its Infolink on the 23rd of April 1997. With

\textsuperscript{24} The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1996, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{25} The Bulletin of the National Registration Department, Malaysia no. 1/97, p. 2.
Infolink, the public will be able to obtain information through the telephone line 600 8277 12; twenty four hours daily on procedures and applications status for identity cards, citizenship, birth certificates, death certificates, child adoption certificates and registrations of marriage and divorce.

3.7.5. **Payment of Fees in the Form of Cash**

The public do not have to pay their fees for the services provided by the Department in the form of stamps any longer, effective from the 1st of July, 1997. This move is to ensure that the public can make their payments easily without any inconvenience.

3.7.6. **Staggered Working Hours**

The Department has continuously introduced new ideas to improve its counter services during the past few years. Some of the ideas are the mobile unit Group, the computerized digital voice calling system and special counters for checking application forms. In early 1997, the Department has introduced another way to improve counter services in the form of staggered working hours. Under this system, the hours of providing services to the public have extended from 7.30 am to 6.30 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays and from 7.30 am to 2.00 p.m. on Saturdays while on Sundays and public holidays the department is closed. In order to accomplish this system, the employees still have to work the same number of hours

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27 The information on the working hours was obtained through an informal interview with a few of the staff at the Head Office of the National Registration Department, Malaysia.
as before but they have different clock-in and clock-out times. In a casual conversation with a few clerical staff, they indicated to the researcher that they are happy with the system as long as they can choose the clock-in and clock-out times, which many of them are able to do so at present.

3.8. **Recognition**

The Department has received recognition from many parties in the form commendations and awards in the last few years. Among them are:-

3.8.1. **Public Service Innovation Award 1995**

The Pahang National Registration Department received the Public Service Innovation Award for the year 1995. This award was for its effort in implementing a computerized system of preparing vouchers, making payments, and maintaining of financial records. The system enable operational costs to be reduced, time to be saved, and work output and customers’ satisfaction to be increased.

3.8.2. **Success in Quality Control Circle Conventions**

In the past few years, the Department’s quality control circle groups were able to win one of the first three top places in the state level Quality Control Circle Conventions. In 1994, the Department’s representative won third place in the Selangor State Convention and while in 1995, they won first place in Selangor State Convention. In 1996, the Department’s representatives again won third place in the

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28 The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 39-40.
29 The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 41-42 and the Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1996, p. 41-42.
Selangor State Convention, second place in the Johore State Convention and second place in the Perak State Convention.

3.8.3. Excellent Public Service Award for the Best Federal Government Agencies in the State of Kelantan for the Year 1994/199530

The Kelantan National Registration Department was chosen by a quality steering committee from among the Federal government agencies in Kelantan to be awarded the Excellent Service Certificate for the year 1994/1995 for being the best public service in the state.

3.8.4. Special Innovation Award31

The Johore National Registration Department received the Special Innovation Award from the Chief Secretary to the Government on the 4th of September, 1996 for implementing the Group Counter System.

Under the system, all applications for High Security Cards are processed immediately on the same day at the Department’s office in Johore before sending them to the Head Office. This move is to overcome the problem of accumulated unprocessed application forms at the Department’s offices in Johore.

30 The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 34.
31 The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1996, p. 12.
3.8.5. **The Deputy State Secretary of Sarawak's Trophy**\(^{32}\)

The Sarawak National Registration Department was selected among Federal and State government agencies in Sarawak to be awarded the Deputy State Secretary of Sarawak's trophy on the 2nd of November, 1996. The award was to recognize the Department's efforts to improve its work quality.

3.8.6. **Commendation**

According to the Department's Annual Report for the year 1996, the Department received many commendation letters from various parties such as government agencies, private agencies, political parties, institutes of learning, associations, voluntary organizations and individuals as well as positive newspaper reports on the Department.\(^{33}\)

3.9. **Shortcomings and Constraints**

Complaints received by organizations sometimes reflect the weaknesses that have to be rectified by the organizations concerned. According to the Department's Annual Report for the year 1996, the Department has so far received 3808 complaints either through the newspaper, letters or telephone calls, all of which have been dealt with by the Department.\(^{34}\)

The Annual Report for the year 1996 also indicated the constraints faced by

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32 Ibid., p. 16.
33 Ibid., p. 43-46.
34 Ibid., p. 43.
the Department in its effort to improve work performance\textsuperscript{35}. The problems which the Department tries to overcome are:

(a) The limited number of posts and grades which are not equivalent to the amount of job responsibilities and work burden which the Department has to carry.

(b) The poor physical conditions at the Department's offices such as the lack of cleanliness, limited spaces, poor air conditioning and poor office layouts cause discomfort to both the employees and customers.

(c) Old and often damaged office equipment such as desk and chairs.

(d) The unsuitable location of district level offices which are far from public places, transport facilities and post offices.

(e) Frequent breakdowns in electricity supply which hinder smooth job performance.

(f) The lack of parking facilities for the public resulted in traffic problems in the surrounding areas of the Department's offices.

(g) There are no uniformity of counter facilities at different counters.

(h) No computer facilities at the district level offices.

Among the problems mentioned above, the physical condition of workplace and working facilities were the factors which according to some researchers could

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 47.
influence the motivation level of employees. As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter II, these two factors are not included in this study due to the limited scope of the study. The researcher also feels that unless the physical condition and facilities are very bad so as to cause discomfort and affect their health and endanger the life of the employees, these factors could not possibly affect the motivation level of the employees in a negative way. The researcher however, made some observations on the physical condition of the Head Office of the Department where this research is carried out. The researcher finds that the physical condition has improved tremendously in terms of cleanliness, office spaces and office layout compared to the conditions a few years ago. The improved physical condition and more parking places for the employees are due to the moving out of the Marriage and Divorce Division, Investigation and Enforcement Division, the Training Unit of the Coordination, Legal Training and Internal Audit Division, and the identity card application counter to the next door building. Both of the buildings of the Head Office are installed with air conditions.

In the last few years (about three to five years ago), many of the divisions have purchased new furniture for the employees to replace the old ones. There were also many renovations made to the workplace to make it a better place. The physical conditions in the two buildings of the Health Offices are now more comfortable than before. In a casual conversation with some of the clerical staff, they indicated to the researcher that they faced no problems with the workplace and facilities. There is a
possibility that the problems mentioned above are faced by the branch offices of the Department and not the Department’s Head Office.

3.10. Future Plans

The Department will continue to improve it efficiency and effectiveness by implementing various plans in the future\(^{36}\). Some of the plans are:-

(a) A study on the possibility of introducing multipurpose cards for public use.

(b) Digital signatures.

(c) The implementation of MS ISO 9000 in the Department.

(d) The revision of Acts, Regulations and forms.

(e) Electronic Government

(f) The implementation of computer systems in all the offices of the Department.

With so many plans in its agenda, able and motivated employees will be assets to the Department as they can assist in the successful implementations of those plans.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 48.
3.11. The Number of Employees and Service Schemes

At present, there are altogether 2191 employees from 28 different types of service schemes in the whole Department to assist the Director-General and Deputy Director-General. The "ordinary rank" clerical staff in the Department are clerical staff who have never been promoted to higher level posts since they join their current service. They consist of the Registration Assistants (grade KP8), lower grade Registration Assistants (grade KP10) and Administrative Assistants (grade N9). They form 57.59 percent of the total number of employees which is the largest percentage of employees in the whole Department compared to other categories of employees. The Registration Assistants (grade KP8) and low grade Registration Assistants (grade KP10) are the close service staff of the Department and their service scheme are classified as Security and Public Defence while the only Administrative Assistant (grade N9) in the Department is an open service staff where the service scheme is classified as Administration and Support. The grade KP8 and N9 staff are in the Support Service Group I while the grade KP10 are in the Support Service Group II. Most of the Grade KP10 staff have been promoted to the grade KP8 posts except for a few who did not succeed in getting promoted. There will be no more recruitment of grade KP10 staff in the future as a result of the restructuring of service schemes in the public service.

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37 The information on the number of employees and the service schemes were obtained from the General Administration, Financial, Personnel and Development Division of the National Registration Department, Malaysia.
The respondents for this research are the "ordinary rank" clerical staff from the various divisions at the Head Office of the Department. There should be altogether 331 "ordinary rank" clerical staff at the Head Office of the Department, which form 45.91 percent of the total number of employees (721 employees) at the Head office. However, at present, there are only 314 "ordinary rank" clerical staff working in the Head Office as a number of them were seconded to the state level offices. The breakdown figures of the "ordinary rank" clerical staff at the Head Office are 305 Registration Assistants (grade KP8), 8 Low grade Registration Assistant (grade KP10) and 1 Administrative Assistant (grade N9)

The breakdown of the "ordinary rank" clerical staff according to the various Divisions are as follows:-

(a) The General Administration, Financial, Personnel and Development Division - 26 Registration Assistants (grade KP8) and 1 Administrative Assistant (grade N9).

(b) The Birth, Death and Child Adoption Division - 34 Registration Assistants (grade KP8) and 1 Low Grade Registration Assistant (grade KP10).

(c) The Identity Card Division - 160 Registration Assistants (grade KP8) and 7 Low Grade Registration Assistants (grade KP10).

(d) The Citizenship Division - 40 Registration Assistants (grade KP8).
(e) The Marriage and Divorce Division - 11 Registration Assistants (grade KP8).

(f) The Information System Services Division - 11 Registration Assistants (grade KP8).

(g) The Investigation and Enforcement Division - 14 Registration Assistants.

(h) The Coordination, Legal, Training and Internal Audit Division - 9 Registration Assistants.

The "ordinary rank" clerical staff perform clerical and operation work. They play important roles in carrying out the functions of the Department as the majority of them are involved in the core activities of the Department such as the processing of applications for high security cards, citizenship, registration of birth, death and child adoption, and registration of marriage and divorce.

3.12. **Training of Employees**

The role of upgrading the ability of the employees and instilling positive values and work ethics in them is the responsibility of the Training Unit in the Coordination, Legal, Training and Internal Audit Division. There are two types of training provided for the employees, namely internal training organized by the Department itself and external training which are organized by agencies such as the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), National Productivity
Corporation (NPC), National Archives, Public Service Department, Ministry Of Internal Affairs, and the Prime Minister's Department.\textsuperscript{40}

Courses organized by the Department are mostly for preparation after job promotion, induction courses for new employees, and courses to improve skills and knowledge related to the work in the Department.\textsuperscript{41}

According to the Department’s Annual Report for the year 1996, 3707 employees including 18 employees in the Support Service Group I and 1,741 from the Support Service Group II undergo internal training organized by the Department in 1996 where in that year, 27 short courses were organized by the Department for its employees.\textsuperscript{42} In fact, based on the Department’s annual report for the year 1996, more of the employees attended courses organized by the Department than courses organized by other agencies per year during the period between 1990 and 1996.\textsuperscript{43} For example, in 1996, about 1200 employees attended courses organized by the Department but only about 100 employees attended courses organized by other agencies. It can be concluded that the Department plays an active role in training its employees.

\textsuperscript{40} The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 31 and the findings of this research through the questionnaire as elaborated in Chapter IV of this report.

\textsuperscript{41} The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1995, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{42} The Annual Report of the National Registration Department, Malaysia for the year 1996, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 39.