The reluctance of Malays to join the Police Force in the Federated Malay States had been a serious obstacle to progress. In the opinion of most Malays at the beginning of the 20th Century a policeman was little better than a dog, recruited from overseas to serve foreign officers. As a result Malay recruits were of the poorest quality and nothing that the British officers could do seemed to have any effect.

But in 1905 Captain A. McD Graham was appointed Adjutant of the newly formed Police Depot in Kuala Lumpur. He knew that a solution must be found to the problem of Malay recruitment if the Depot was to be a success, and he must have spent many hours trying to discover the answer. Before coming on transfer to Kuala Lumpur, Graham had served for ten years in Perak, first with the Perak Sikhs and later with the Malay States Guides. He must have met Raja Alang Iskandar, the Sultan’s son, who had returned from Oxford in 1902, and the solution which Graham put forward to Capt. H.L. Talbot the Commissioner of Police of the F.M.S. was probably inspired by this acquaintance.

Graham suggested that if a member of a Malay Royal family could be persuaded to accept appointment as an officer in the F.M.S. Police, Malay public opinion about service in the Police was certain to change. He put this suggestion to Talbot, naming Raja Alang Iskandar, and Talbot recommended it with enthusiasm to Sir Frank Swettenham, the High Commissioner, early in 1905. Swettenham supported the proposal and discussed it with Sultan Idris, and the Sultan, a Ruler of great foresight, gave his approval.

H.R.H. Sultan Iskandar in Police uniform, with Raja Abdul Aziz (Raja Muda).

Photo: Police Museum.
H.R.H. Sultan Iskandar in the uniform of Honorary Commissioner of Police F.M.S.

Photo: National Archives.
A new era in Police history began on Aug. 1st 1905, when Raja Alang Iskandar was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Police and was made responsible for Malay recruiting at the Police Depot, at Bluff Road, Kuala Lumpur. Raja Alang Iskandar had been serving in the Secretariat in Taiping but he found office work uncongenial, and he accepted the challenge of the new appointment willingly. He soon began to travel widely, first in Perak and later in the other three Malay States, explaining to village Headmen and groups of young Malays the advantages of joining the re-organised Police force, and his campaign soon began to show results. He also designed the new uniform which was worn by Malay Police until 1941:

the khaki tunic and shorts, khaki puttees, black boots and a black pill-box cap.

He took an active part in sport at the Depot and continued to devote his very considerable ability to the improvement of the Police Force until 1916 when, on the death of his father, Sultan Idris, he returned to Perak to became the Raja Bendahara.

After he became Sultan of Perak in 1918, in succession to his half brother, he accepted the position of Honorary Commissioner of Police, and retained an un-failing interest in the Force until his death 22 years later.