

Crime up 10 percent nationwide
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Crime in Malaysia has risen 10 percent so far this year, with police blaming the rise on factors including an influx of foreigners and moral decay among the young.

The crime index rose 10.6 percent in the first quarter of the year compared to the same period in 2006, including a 23.7 percent spike in rape cases, the Star daily reported.

Criminal investigations department director Christopher Wan (left) defended police performance, saying officers were solving more crimes.

"Although the index has gone up, the solving rate stood at 38.2 percent, an increase over the 36.9 per cent achieved in January to March 2006," he was quoted as saying by the state Bernama news agency.

"People must trust the police. We are doing our best," he said.

Wan issued a list of reasons for the rise, including greater reporting of crimes and what he said was an influx of foreigners who contribute to serious crimes.

Rising cost of living

The rising cost of living is forcing wage-earners to turn to criminal activity while people who migrate from rural to urban areas are committing crimes to survive, he was reported saying.

Another reason is the "moral decline of youths. This has led to the increase in the number of rape and murder cases," the New Straits Times reported, citing Wan's list.

Wan could not be immediately reached for comment.

The figures follow news over the weekend that crime in the capital Kuala Lumpur surged 40 percent in the first three months of 2007, raising fears it could undermine a major tourism push in Malaysia.

Malaysia is aiming to boost tourist arrivals to 20.1 million in 2007 up from some 17.5 million last year in its "Visit Malaysia Year" campaign.

Kuala Lumpur's mayor Abdul Hakim Borhan today tried to allay concerns the higher crime rate would dampen tourist arrivals.

"I am sure it will not in any way stop the flow of tourists visiting Kuala Lumpur," Abdul Hakim told AFP.

"We have police officers in every corner, especially in the city to make sure it is safe for everyone, and not just tourists," he said.

The mayor said there were plans to increase the number of closed-circuit television cameras in crime-ridden areas in the city.

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