

**Hishammuddin hints at new security steps as fear grows**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 12 — In the face of wrath from Malaysians on rising crime, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said new security steps will be rolled out soon to prove Putrajaya's pledge to make the country a safe place.

Despite a recent spate of high-profile kidnappings, brutal assaults and robberies, the Home Ministry and the government's efficiency unit, PEMANDU, have claimed that crime dropped by 11 per cent last year and street crime by 40 per cent since Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak unrolled his grand Government Transformation Plan (GTP) and made busting crime a national priority two years ago.

"As a father and also the minister responsible for the country's security, I am aware of the growing concern among Malaysians. I truly understand their fear of becoming a victim of crime," Hishammuddin (picture) told the New Straits Times in a report published today.

"There will be more initiatives coming," he was quoted as saying.

But Hishammuddin did not offer a hint as to the "initiatives" that were in the pipeline.

"The government is very committed to making Malaysia a safe place," he was quoted as adding.

The home minister insisted that the government was not resting on its laurels as its statistics have shown it was on the right track to curbing crime.

But Malaysia's expatriate community has weighed in on the issue and said they were increasingly fearful for their safety here, especially after the kidnapping of 12-year-old Dutch schoolboy Nayati Moodliar, who was snatched while walking to school earlier this year, hit global headlines.

"When I talk to expats in Shell, there is a growing insecurity with regards to safety," said Darrel Devan Lourdes, country human resource manager for Shell Malaysia, at a conference on human resources here yesterday.

He noted that the living environment was an issue that Malaysia, which is trying to graduate to developed nation status, needed to address as part of its initiative to shore up its talent base.

"Talent will stay in Malaysia if it's liveable," he said.

Lourdes said later on the sidelines of the conference that whether the fears were based on perception or reality was up for debate, but the sense of "insecurity" among expatriates was undeniable.

In the latest high-profile crime to be reported, the mother of a Penang federal lawmaker was robbed at knifepoint in a pre-dawn home invasion in George Town yesterday.

Other cases which made headlines in recent weeks include an ATM robbery at a hypermarket that saw about RM1.2 million carted away; a carjacking and kidnapping of a Singaporean family in Johor and a Malacca clerk who died after she fell off her motorbike after being attacked by two men.

Following the string of ATM robberies, banks are also now mulling moving their ATMs located in malls, supermarkets, petrol and rail stations to alternative locations.

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