

PM challenged to explain discrepancy in crime stats
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 13 — Putrajaya should seriously consider roping in an impartial third party to present the country's real crime situation which is now under doubt, an opposition lawmaker said today.

"Tan Sri Musa Hassan has put the Najib administration to great embarrassment by openly accusing the authorities of 'hiding facts' from the public over the country's crime rate," Gobind Singh Deo, the DAP MP for Puchong said in a statement, referring to the former Inspector-General of Police's remarks to The Malaysian Insider published today.

The retired policeman had urged the federal government not to mask crime figures, pointing out that if crime was not on the rise, top-ranking officials and ministers would not need to hire bodyguards as the home minister, the current IGP Tan Sri Ismail Omar and the government's efficiency unit, PEMANDU, were put on the defensive over a recent spate of high-profile reports of kidnappings, assaults and robberies in public areas and in broad daylight.

Musa had also suggested the government appoint a third party to conduct an independent review of the country's crime rate and produce its own statistics, saying that he had roped in Universiti Sains Malaysia researchers to prepare crime statistics during his four years in office as IGP. He was succeeded by Ismail on September 13, 2010.

"The credibility of PEMANDU is now seriously in question. The government cannot sit back and remain quiet," Gobind said.

He pointed out that Musa was not the only establishment figure to have acknowledged a spike in the crime rate, as Selangor Deputy CPO Datuk A. Thaiveegan has also referred to a surge in crime incidents in Malaysia's most-developed state, which the latter blamed on the government's decision to repeal the Emergency Ordinance last year.

The archaic security law allowed for detentions without trial of up to two years and was frequently used to rein in gang leaders but had been strongly criticised for its misuse, which had seen minors being remanded and locked up with adult suspects.

Despite the repeated assurances and statistics from the authorities, Malaysians, especially women, appear to be unconvinced and have grown more insecure when out on the streets.

Even the country'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.

In the latest high-profile crime to be reported today, a 60-year-old widow in Kuantan was found dead by her son, believed strangled by robbers who broke into her home.

Earlier this week, the mother of a Penang federal lawmaker was punched and robbed at knifepoint in a pre-dawn home invasion in George Town.

Other cases which made headlines in recent weeks include thieves hauling off RM1.17 million from several automated teller machines placed at a hypermarket in Wangsa Maju, a densely-populated suburb in the national capital, millions of ringgit worth of high-tech medical equipment being carted off from several hospitals in the Klang Valley, 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.

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