

**Dr M agrees Malaysia less safe, suggests more funds for tackling crime**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today agreed that Malaysia's streets have become less secure, labelling it a "new phenomenon" that the government should tackle by spending more funds.

The country's longest serving prime minister said it was no longer feasible for the public to be entirely dependent on the police force to combat crime, despite noting that the government has taken measures to increase the number of security personnel keeping the streets safe.

"I think security is a problem now in Malaysia... but we need to have a proper study to find out about it.

"We need to spend more money to deal with something that is a new phenomenon," he told the Perdana Leadership Foundation CEO Forum 2012 here during a question and answer session.

The authorities have been struggling to battle the public's negative perception of the country's crime rate, which has been heavily affected by the continuing exchange of horror stories on assaults, robberies and kidnappings that have gone viral online.

Opposition lawmakers and civil society groups have also widely disputed crime statistics released by the police and government efficiency unit PEMANDU, claiming that the data has been manipulated to give a false impression that the rate has dropped.

But the authorities have defended their statistics, which they say show the crime rate is on the decline, making Malaysia one of the top 20 most peaceful countries in the world based on the latest Global Peace Index (GPI).

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein had also this month accused opposition parties of taking advantage of issues, which were of concern to Malaysians, especially the crime rate, for political mileage with the 13th general election due soon.

But Dr Mahathir appeared today to suggest that the public's fear of crime was not unfounded, pointing to the increasing frequency of neighbourhoods erecting security booths and fences to boost security.

"Yes, I think we have less security now," he said.

"We have gated developments which are practically fenced all around the development area because we are afraid of someone coming and robbing or breaking into our homes.

"I live in a gated area but there have been quite a lot of robberies still," he said.

Dr Mahathir suggested that the problem stemmed from the high number of foreign workers being employed in the construction industry or other dangerous lower-income fields.

He said that these workers might treat petty crime as a sort of “past time” to help earn more pocket money.

“We are very dependent on foreign labour. Our people won’t work in construction sites so we need them and our contractors love foreign labour because they work very hard and willing to work overtime if you pay them,” he said.

“This is something we need to learn to tackle,” he added.

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