

Overall law and order situation in the first half of 2018 remains stable

The overall crime situation in Hong Kong in the first half of 2018 remained stable with a decrease of 6.2 per cent in the overall crime figure over the same period in 2017, according to the Police Director of Crime and Security, Mr Li Chi-hang.

Speaking at a press conference today (July 25) to review the crime situation in the territory between January and June this year, Mr Li said a total of 26,550 cases of crime were recorded during the period, representing a decrease of 1,759 cases or 6.2 per cent over the corresponding period of last year, hitting a new low since 1977 in which half-year crime statistics were first kept.

There were a total of 4,361 violent crime cases recorded in the first half of this year, a decrease of 3.2 per cent when compared with the same period of last year.

Decrease was seen in majority of the crimes whilst crimes recorded with increase included homicide, wounding and serious assault, indecent assault and deception.

There were 17 homicide cases in the first half of 2018, a rise of six cases. All cases were detected. Most of the cases arose from family disputes and couple relationship. A double murder case committed with genuine firearm has aroused grave concern in the society.

Currently, there is no indication of worsening situation in regard to genuine gun crimes or inflow of firearms, nevertheless Police will always remain alert, maintain close contact with relevant departments, and spare no effort to look into every single case and intelligence involving firearms in order to ensure the safety of members of the public and the society.

A total of 2,316 cases of wounding and serious assault were recorded in the first half of this year, a rise of 82 cases. The rise was mainly driven by disputes caused by drunkenness and daily trivial matters. Increase was also noted for cases involving domestic violence, triad and debt collection activities.

There were 537 indecent assault cases in the first six months of 2018, an increase of 19 cases. Cases committed by strangers totalled 320, and cases in which the victims acquainted the offenders via Internet increased by five cases to 15 cases.

For deception, 3,671 cases were reported, a rise of 110 cases or 3.1 per cent. There were 272 cases of romance scams, an increase of 2.5 folds; 69 cases of employment frauds, an increase of 3.3 folds; 90 cases of investment frauds, an increase of 70 per cent; and 382 cases of deception involving

hacking of instant messaging applications, an increase of 4 folds. For telephone deception and street deception, 165 cases (a drop of 62.8 per cent) and 16 cases (a drop of 70.4 per cent) were recorded respectively.

Police conducted multiple enforcement operations against investment fraud, employment fraud and online romance scams in the first half of this year and arrested a total of 109 persons in connection with these types of deception in which over 700 victims were defrauded, incurring over \$253 million of loss in total.

Police established the Anti-Deception Coordination Centre (ADCC) in July last year. As at June 30, the ADCC has received more than 22,000 calls for help, and intercepted over \$530 million of payment in 288 deception cases in collaboration with the banks.

“In view of remarkable achievement of the ADCC, Police will strengthen its functions in aspects including intelligence analysis, interception of crime proceeds, anti-deception publicity, as well as collaboration with other stakeholders, with a view to preventing deception in a timely and effective manner,” said Mr Li.

Crimes with the number of cases dropped included rape, burglary, serious drugs offences and robbery.

There were 23 rape cases in the first half year of 2018, down by nine cases, and 20 cases were detected. Three cases were committed by strangers and eight cases involved victims aged under 16.

For burglary, there were 808 cases, a drop of 170 cases, marking a record low since half-year crime statistics were first kept in 1977. Around 70 per cent of the cases were committed at domestic premises.

In the first half of 2018, 732 serious drug cases were recorded, a drop of 104 cases or 12.4 per cent.

Mr Li pointed out that international collaboration was crucial to the interception of inflow of drugs to Hong Kong. As such, Hong Kong Police have maintained close liaison and intelligence exchange with the Mainland and overseas law enforcement agencies.

Recent successful joint operations included the Mainland-Hong Kong joint operation in January, in which six persons were arrested by both sides in total for trafficking a ton of “ice” by sea. In a joint operation with the Australian police in May, four Hong Kong people were arrested in Australia and 200 kg of “ice” was seized.

In the first six months of 2018, there were 82 robbery cases, being a decrease of 8.9 per cent, which hit its lowest since half-year crime statistics were first kept in 1977. Over the period, there were four cases with substantial amount of loss, including three jewellery store robberies and a case in which staff members of a money exchange company were robbed. Among them, three cases were detected with eight persons arrested and most of the lost property recovered.

To combat this type of robbery, Police will step up patrol at high-risk spots, maintain swift response capabilities, maintain close liaison with relevant industries for possible enhancement of the security measures, and strengthen intelligence work, including the collaboration with the Mainland and overseas law enforcement agencies, to prevent and detect robbery cases, and neutralise related criminal syndicates.

As regards child abuse, 467 cases were recorded in the first half of the year, being an increase of 9.1 per cent. The rise was mainly driven by the increase of those involving ill-treating and neglect of child, which totalled 154 cases, an increase of 43 cases. Case with serious casualties also increased.

Police proactively work on publicity and education to enhance the society's alertness and identifying ability of these cases. Over the first half of this year, Police organised a total of eight thematic seminars together with the Social Welfare Department and the Education Bureau for over a thousand kindergarten, primary and secondary school teachers, staff members and social workers to help them identify and handle the cases.

"In conclusion, the law and order situation in the first half of 2018 remained stable. Deception, facilitated by the use of technology such as social media platforms, remains one of the greatest challenges of the Force in recent years. The criminals committed crimes by taking advantage of the extensive, anonymous and cross-boundary nature of the cyber world, and that the lack of knowledge of some people about emerging industries and information technology also allowed the criminals to convince victims to send money with various excuses.

"In the light of the recent crime trends, Police will strengthen the collaboration with the Mainland and overseas law enforcement agencies, the innovation and technology as well as the financial and banking sectors, and enhance the capability in detection and recovering the ill-gotten gains.

"The ADCC will enhance its capacity to identify the ever-changing modus operandi, strengthen intelligence capability and exchange with various stakeholders, and continuously adjust anti-deception strategies with a view to alerting members of the public of the latest pitfalls in good time and fostering our partnership with the community in combating and preventing deception," said Mr Li.