

UN report: TT has second highest crime rate in region

By RESHMA BAAL Saturday, June 18 2011

One out of every two persons living in Trinidad and Tobago is scared of becoming the next victim of crime.

This was revealed yesterday by a United Nation's Development Programme's (UNDP) study on the country's development.

The study on human development, which was the first for the region, addressed the issue of crime and violence in seven Caribbean islands. Preliminary findings of the study were presented yesterday during a press conference at the UN Information Centre, Bretton Hall, Victoria Avenue.

UN Resident Co-ordinator, Dr Marcia de Castro said Trinidad and Tobago was recorded as having the second highest crime rate in the region, after Jamaica.

"The Caribbean region has one of the highest crime rates in the world, and so we decided to focus the study on that."

She explained that Trinidad and Tobago was one of the fastest developing nations in the Caribbean, but crime can prove to undermine all major achievements.

In the 2010 global index on Human Development, De Castro said Trinidad and Tobago ranked 64 out of 130 countries.

"You cannot leave the issue of fixing crime solely in the hands of the State. What is needed is collaboration with different sectors, after all it is the citizens committing the crime, and we all need to take responsibility," De Castro said.

National Coordinator of the Human Development Report, Alana Wheeler, said after studying 15,000 citizens, in seven countries in the Caribbean region, it was determined that a more citizen-centred approach to tackling crime was needed.

"In Trinidad and Tobago, we have seen a focus on law enforcement on a national level. We need a shift to more citizen security measures, such as neighbourhood watches, and more police patrols," Wheeler said.

She also noted that the study showed youth delinquency began as early as nine years, and most youths detained at the Youth Training Centre, (YTC) in Trinidad and Tobago, were detained due to illegal acts, such as disobeying teachers and parents, as well as fist fights.

“At the YTC, these youths are placed amongst the criminal offenders. What we saw was the stronger ones influencing the weaker ones. If it is not addressed, it can develop into criminal behaviour,” Wheeler said.

She also noted that the majority of the population believed that more social intervention was needed in dealing with the issue of crime, such as investment in education, jobs for young people, reducing poverty, and reducing corruption.

The study was conducted in Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Guyana, Suriname and Barbados from December 2010 to February, 2011, at an approximate cost of US\$ 200,000. The official launch will be held in September.

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