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Study on overcrowding in jails

MELAKA: The Home Ministry will conduct a programme to reduce overcrowding in prisons where there are now 36,040 prisoners in 31 prisons in the country.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the proposal included repatriating 10,800 foreigners or about 30 per cent of foreign prisoners to their country of origin.

"We will also study the proposal that the prisoners categorised as light offenders like for theft and snatching not to be imprisoned but made to do community work or work for public benefit," he told reporters after a visit to the Sungai Udang Prison Camp here today.

Also present was Melaka Chief

Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam and deputy home minister Datuk Wira Abu Seman Yusop.

The construction of the RM305 million complex that begun in 2006 is almost completed on a 52ha lot to detain 2,000 convicts, including 300 women.

The prison complex is expected to be fully operational in May and will among other functions have a separate men and women cells; staff quarters; bachelors' quarters; a mosque, a motor workshop; a club-house, a management office; and a community hall.

Hishammuddin said the proposal to repatriate a convict to his or her country of origin required bilateral negotiations.

He said cases categorised as serious crimes and rape calling for death sentences numbered 18,784 while lighter offences as snatching and theft numbered 17,256.

"Steps to reduce overcrowding in prisons are approaches to being a developed country that detained convicts yet made efforts to return offenders to society," he said.

He also said the ministry planned under the 10th Malaysia Plan to build a health prison that took care of convicts with HIV/Aids, Tuberculosis, and mental problems.

"As of now such convicts numbering 1,607 are isolated in special blocks," he said.