

# Crime against the elderly jumps 25% up to June

**M**ADAM Lee Teck Kim, 74, was returning to her Toa Payoh flat with a bag of groceries last October when a man tailed her into the lift.

Once they were in the lift, he rasped in Hokkien: "I want your gold chain, that's all."

Cowed, she handed it over. He ordered her out of the lift on the fifth floor.

Just like that, she became among the rising number of the elderly who have fallen victim to crime, a trend which stuck out in the police's half-yearly report card released yesterday.

Robberies and snatch thefts targeting those aged 60 and above jumped 25 per cent between January and June to hit 145 cases. The figure for the first half of last year was 116.

Overall, however, crimes registered a marginal 1-per-cent increase over the first six months of last year. Murders doubled in number to 12, though.

Crimes against the elderly, such as hold-ups in lifts, typically happen as these old folk – mainly female – go about their daily routine in the common areas of housing estates.

Contrary to the belief among the elderly that their estates are "safe", the figures indicate no estate was exempt.

The fact that many robberies take place in broad daylight shows how confident the perpetrators are of getting away with fleecing the older and weaker.

It is also the daytime when the elderly are usually alone – their children are out at work and their grandchildren, in school.

Senior citizens also fall prey to scams and that have also made victims of younger people as well.

Seventy old folk were cheated of their money, jewellery and mobile phones – eight more than in the first six months of last year.

One ruse 11 old folk fell for in the first half of this year is that of the "electrician" conducting flat-to-flat inspections.

Once in the home, the imposter distracts his victim by asking him to hold on to wires or to use a pole to touch a switch or bulb.

Out of sight, he would scoop up the valuables from around the house.

All those arrested for preying on the elderly were younger than their victims.

Some lawyers have suggested enhancing penalties for those who target old folk, but others argue that the penalties for robbery and theft are already heavy.

- THE STRAITS TIMES

## HELPDESK 我的字典

**Groceries:**  
杂货 zá huò

**Ruse:** 诡计 guǐ jì

**Inspections:**  
检验 jiǎn yàn