

GOVT SEEKS STRONGER DETERRENT

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PM wants white-collar crooks caned

By WONG CHUN WAI

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government will seek stronger power to deal with white-collar criminals including stiffer punishment, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said the proposals included caning white-collar criminals which would be given wide publicity by the press.

Dr Mahathir said it also wanted the Anti-Corruption Agency to be given wider powers to deal with these crooks.

Dr Mahathir believed now offenders did not treat the present sentences "as enough of a punishment."

He said stiffer punishment meted out on such criminals would act as a stronger deterrent.

The Cabinet, he said, had been directed to look into the various aspects of legislations.

However, he clarified that what the Government had in mind was caning and not the usual whipping for convicts.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the increase in white-collar crimes. For the first five months of this year, 76 people were convicted of such crimes compared to 70 for the whole of last year.

On Wednesday, the Prisons Department said it wanted mandatory whipping for white-collar crimes.

Prisons director-general Datuk Yassin Jaafar said the department would support any move by the Government to amend the law.

As to the controversy of the 10 million Telekom Malaysia shares allocation to Maika Holdings Berhad, Dr Mahathir said he had been away and did not have details of the case.