

# Tougher rape law

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KUALA LUMPUR: Soon, rapists may be jailed for up to 30 years and offenders over 50 years old may be whipped.

These are among proposals to amend the Penal Code to raise the maximum jail term from 20 years to 30 years for incestual rape, rape-cum-murder and other rapes, which will be tabled in Parliament in September.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said the cabinet, at its meeting last week, also approved caning for those aged 50 and above found guilty of committing the offence.

"If a guy of 50 is capable of doing rape, he is capable to withstand the whipping," he said yesterday when explaining the rationale after chairing a plenary session at the three-day Civil Service Conference.

At present, those aged 50 and above are spared the rotan.

In an immediate response, Bar Council vice-president Yeo Yang Poh said increasing the maximum penalty is acceptable if the discretion still lies with the judge.

"On the caning part, we believe there is no conclusive study that says this is an effective deterrent to rape. It is not a form of penalty we support especially for the aged," Yeo told *theSun*.

He said the problem of crimes against women should not be addressed from the angle of punishment alone but also education as in inculcating respect for women.

Rais said the decision to again increase the penalty for rape in less than two years was due to the rise in incest, rape-cum-murder and rape-cum-robbery cases.

The Penal Code was last amended in 2001, among others, to include mandatory whipping for rape and incest, defining incest and

providing a maximum 20-year jail term and mandatory whipping for the offence.

Amendments would also be made to the Penal Code to include provisions for anti-terrorism and for a time frame for the police to give feedback on reports made by the public on each case.

Rais said the ministry would also amend the Criminal Procedure Code and the Criminal Justice Act.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, directed ministers at last week's cabinet meeting to be more vigilant to the current crime issues, following the abduction and murder of Canny Ong from a basement car park in Bangsar two weeks ago.

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