

28/06/2003

Increased penalties for rape (HL)

Shamini Darshni

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Cabinet last week approved amendments to the Penal Code that will increase the maximum sentence for rape and incest to 30 years and allow whipping for those aged above 50 years.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said the amendments would be tabled in Parliament in September.

"Of late, there has been an increase in incest, rape-and-robbery and rape-and-murder cases. So the punishment meted out has to match the gravity of the crime," he said.

He was speaking at a Press conference after chairing the second plenary session on day two of the Eighth Civil Service Conference today.

On those aged above 50 being whipped for committing sex-related crimes, Rais simply said: "If a man of 50 can commit rape, then he is capable of withstanding a whipping."

He said amendments to the Penal Code related to incest and terrorism were also approved by the Cabinet for tabling in Parliament.

Currently, rape carries a jail term of not less than five years and not more than 20 years, with whipping for those below 50.

The Cabinet approval comes in the wake of the rape-cum-murder of market analyst Canny Ong, whose body was found in a culvert in Jalan Klang Lama on June 17. Her remains will be cremated tomorrow.

She was abducted from the underground car park of the Bangsar Shopping Complex on June 13.

Rais said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi also directed the authorities to be more vigilant in protecting women from becoming possible rape victims.

On the Criminal Procedure Code and the Criminal Justice Act 1953, he said they needed to be amended to make the Government's anti-crime stance very clear.

He said enforcement activities needed to be improved as the laws were largely adequate.

"The laws are apt and complete but we have to translate that into enforcement work."

The police, he said, should nurture an anti-crime culture in the city which should include the public.

Bernama quoted Rais as saying that the amendments would include a timeframe for the police to give feedback on reports made by the public on each case.

"The people have a right to receive feedback on whether there is any follow-up on the case," he said.

He said owners of shopping complexes should install close circuit television cameras (CCTVs) which should be monitored properly.

The police, he added, could assist by visiting the complexes to create an atmosphere of safety for the general public.