

PM wants theft curbed

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi wants "things to be done" and the public kept safe as he is concerned over the increasing number of violent snatch thefts.

Police had been asked to beef up patrols and surveillance to prevent snatch thefts and violent acts, said Home Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad.

He said Abdullah and Cabinet ministers were briefed by

Housing and Local Government Minister and MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting on two incidents where Tunku Abdul Rahman College students had fallen victim to violence.

The Cabinet was told that accountancy student Lee Khian Yip, 18, died from slash wounds inflicted by two men on a motorcycle in Wangsa Maju on Saturday.

Another student, Phang Kar Wei, 23, was repeatedly assaulted and slashed three times on

his neck and hands, also by two men on a motorcycle just 15 minutes after Khian Yip was attacked.

Kar Wei was assaulted in Taman Melati, about 2km from Wangsa Maju.

Radzi said the Cabinet was shocked to hear from Ong that a "large number" of the 2,000 people at an open forum on Tuesday were snatch theft victims.

"While the police have done a lot to overcome this problem, more needs to be done," he told

reporters after his ministry's weekly post-Cabinet meeting. "That is why the Prime Minister wants something done.

"On the Government's part, we have amended the Penal Code to reflect the severity of the crime. Those who commit snatch thefts will be dealt with severely by the law."

He said Section 390(e), on snatch theft, would send a clear message to offenders that it would be treated as robbery, and no longer as theft, where

they could be jailed up to 14 years and be whipped.

Radzi said snatch thefts in Kuala Lumpur had declined because closed-circuit television cameras had been placed in critical areas.

"The public must also play their part by being vigilant and careful about their safety.

"They should not take their safety for granted. If they take more steps to look after their safety, then half the battle is won," he said.