

31 MAY 1996

Karpal-Cohens

THE COHENS REQUEST A FEW DAYS HERE BEFORE LEAVING

PULAU PINANG, May 31 (Bernama) -- A New Zealand woman and her son, who were recently pardoned by the Pardons Board after serving part of their life imprisonment for possession of dadah, wish to remain a few days here before returning home.

Their lawyer, Karpal Singh, said that Lorraine Philis Cohen, 53, and her son, Aaron Shelton Cohen, 30, conveyed their request to the government through him when he visited them at the state prison yesterday.

Karpal Singh also hoped that the government would arrange a normal departure for them.

"Both have paid more than their debts to society and should not be allowed to suffer the indignity of being escorted by Immigration officials to the airport and directed to their homeland," he said in a statement issued here today.

The Cohens were arrested on Feb 9, 1985 at the Bayan Lepas International Airport on suspicion of dadah trafficking.

Lorraine was sentenced to death by the High Court here on Sept 1, 1987 for trafficking in 140.7gm of heroin while Aaron was ordered to serve life imprisonment and to be given six strokes of rotan for possession of 34.16gm of heroin.

In August 1989, the Supreme Court commuted her death sentence to life imprisonment after amending the charge from that of trafficking to possession of the dadah.

Last Saturday, the state Pardons Board announced that the duo had been pardoned and can therefore return to their country. They are scheduled to leave on June 29.

Karpal also welcomed the government's decision to release 39 Thai nationals held in various part of the country as a gesture of goodwill between the two countries.

Congratulating Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the release, he said Malaysia's image abroad would certainly be enhanced by such a move.

Karpal, who is MP for Jelutong, also called on Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon to look into complaints that High Court judges were not accorded the due respect when they attended the opening of the State Legislative Assembly by Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir on Monday.

He said the judges who attended the opening ceremony "were not given proper treatment and were left on their own most of the time".

During Dr Lim Chong Eu's tenure as Chief Minister, he made it a point to ensure that judges were treated according to protocol, respect and dignity their office command, he added.

"I call upon Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon to look into this matter to ensure that such incidents would not recur," he said. -- BERNAMA

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