

40 Asian NGOs denounce Yong's execution
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A regional human rights group based in Bangkok has denounced Singapore's imposition of mandatory death penalty on 22-year-old Malaysian Yong Vui Kong.

Forum-Asia executive director suaram fidh report on undocumented migrants and refugees 210308 yap swee seng said "death penalty should be eliminated for crimes such as economic crimes and drug-related offences" as highlighted in a 1996 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions.

Yap (right), who represents over 40 human rights organisations in Asia, added that these offences fall outside the scope of "most serious crimes" and therefore, should not be subjected to the death penalty.

Yap said in Singapore, a person may be imposed the death penalty for drug-related offenses under the Misuse of Drugs Act but this is "clearly in contravention" to the recommendation of the UN expert.

"We urge the Singapore government to observe the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 62/149 on 18 December 2007, which calls on all countries that are still retaining the death penalty to implement a moratorium on the death penalty and move towards its abolition," he said.

"The resolution has been adopted by the general assembly, where Malaysia is a member, and it has established a new international trend towards the abolition of the death penalty," he added.

Singapore and Malaysia are members of the United Nations general assembly.

Government dragging feet

The case is significant for Malaysians as it could set a precedent for future cases involving citizens on death row or who face criminal charges in foreign countries.

This is especially if the government succeeds in getting Singapore to commute Yong's death sentence to life imprisonment through the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Malaysia has in the past intervened in cases outside the country, for example when a young citizen who was detained for over a year in Laos for alleged human trafficking was freed after intervention of Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, Wisma Putra and the Umno Youth Community Complaints Bureau.

NONETHis time around Malaysia has largely kept silent on the issue. Yong's lawyer M Ravi (left) claimed this was because the case had no "political mileage" for the government.

Yap expressed grave concern over the position of the Malaysian government on Yong's case.

"We call on the Malaysian government to protect the rights of its citizens in foreign countries pro-actively instead of evading its own obligations on the justification of 'non interference'," stressed Yap.

Yong was caught trafficking 47 grams of diamorphine (heroin) into the republic in 2007, when he was only 19.

Despite appealing to the Singapore Court of Appeal, the Malaysian national's plea against the mandatory death sentence was dismissed on May 14.

Ravi continues to plead his case, saying the rejection of his clemency plea by the Singapore President SR Nathan was "flawed and illegal".

There was a flicker of hope for Yong when the Malaysian government showed some interest in meeting Ravi.

However, all hopes fizzled yesterday when the High Commissioner's office in Singapore called Ravi to cancel a meeting reportedly scheduled between the lawyer and Nazri's office this week.

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