

Malaysia to assist in Yong's appeal
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The government has finally agreed to engage its Singapore counterpart through diplomatic channels to obtain clemency for death row prisoner Yong Vui Kong.

NONE "We sympathise with what has transpired and we will do everything possible within our power or within diplomatic channels to solve this," said Foreign Affairs Minister Anifah Aman (right).

Yong's lawyer M Ravi had travelled from Singapore to meet the minister today alongside Batu parliamentarian Tian Chua.

"I will be writing to the government of Singapore based on the arguments they (Ravi and Chua) gave and plead for clemency... he (Yong) has one more avenue which is clemency, so we will be writing to the Singapore government soon," said Anifah.

Yong was only 19 when arrested for trafficking 47.27g of the controlled drug diamorphine in 2007.

His execution in December last year was halted when Ravi filed for a stay pending his clemency appeal.

Unnoticed case

The case went almost unnoticed locally until last-minute attempts by Malaysian parliamentarians, lawyers and civil society groups raised the issue on various platforms to stop Yong's execution as his clemency period ends next month.

Anifah said that they will look into the "legal basis" on why Yong should be saved from the gallows.

"One is diplomacy but at the same time, I am waiting for them to give me the legal basis on why he should be spared. It's not just from the government but it's also from the private sector (lawyers' side).

Asked if the government would initiate a process for Yong to undergo his sentence in Malaysia, Anifah said, "That's not in our power, that is with Singapore. We must focus on getting clemency and we will write to the Singapore government to plead with them to give him this opportunity."

NONE Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Chua (right) was relieved that the government has agreed to intercede on Yong's behalf.

Chua said that the ministry will also send a representative to hold a watching brief when the judicial review on his sentence is held.

"We are pleased that the Foreign Affairs Ministry has shown an interest in this because it is their duty to look after the safety and well-being of Malaysian traveling abroad," he said.

Emergency motion rejected

However, earlier today Chua's emergency motion to debate on Yong's fate was rejected in chambers today by the Dewan Rakyat speaker.

According to him, it was denied based on technical grounds, as another member of parliament had filed a motion beforehand.

Singapore, like Malaysia, still metes out the death penalty as punishment for drugs-related charges among other offences.

However, in 2002, German national 23-year-old Julia Susanne Bohl who was convicted for drug trafficking escaped Singapore's gallows after investigation showed that the drug she allegedly possessed was not pure cannabis.

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