

**Death penalty to stay, says Nazri**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**March 29, 2012**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 29 — Putrajaya has no immediate plans to abolish the death penalty, Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz has said, insisting that Malaysia still needs the punishment as a deterrent for serious crimes.

The minister in the Prime Minister's Department said, however, that the proposal to remove the provision would be considered but only after a thorough review is conducted.

"The suggestion will be given fair consideration once a thorough review and careful study is done on all aspects, and after taking into cognisance the viewpoints of all relevant parties.

"This is needed because the scrapping of the death penalty or natural life imprisonment sentences would greatly impact the country's legal system," he said in a written response to Karpal Singh (DAP-Bukit Gelugor) yesterday.

Explaining further, Nazri said it was appropriate to maintain the death penalty to deter serious offences like murder under Section 302 of the Penal Code, drug trafficking under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952 and other crimes involving firearms, ammunition and explosives.

The Padang Rengas MP added that the same would apply to the natural life imprisonment sentence as it also involves serious crimes.

"The government at this time does not plan to abolish the death penalty or natural life sentence from the country's legal system.

"The government is of the view that these penalties are still needed for certain heavy crimes.

"These penalties are more retributive in nature, that is to react towards offenders based on the crimes they have committed," he said.

Earlier this month, Malaysian Bar members unanimously passed a resolution at the Bar Council's annual general meeting (AGM) calling for capital punishment to be abolished and replaced with life imprisonment instead.

Bar Council president Lim Chee Wee had urged Datuk Seri Najib Razak to add this to his administration's series of law reforms, saying the move should be "leadership driven".

Lim claimed that empirical evidence from surveys has shown that despite the introduction of mandatory death sentences for drug trafficking, the number of cases continues to increase.

"Death penalty has zero deterrent effect, so why keep it in our books?" he said.

He pointed out that in light of weaknesses in the country's legal system, innocent individuals could be found guilty of the offence and sentenced to death despite not committing the

crime.

Lim had also urged parliamentarians to join the council in its campaign against the death penalty by pushing for amendments to current laws when the House sits from next week until April.

The Malaysian Insider

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