

# Kill the **death** penalty

> Legal activists seek repeal, moratorium of capital punishment for all offences

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**PETALING JAYA:** The moratorium and review of the death penalty should be extended to all capital punishment offences, not only drug trafficking, say legal activists.

Lawyers for Liberty founder N. Surendran told *theSun* yesterday civil society is calling for the repeal of the death penalty for all offences, and said capital punishment is incompatible with a modern, civilised justice system.

“It is the ultimate denial of human rights. We welcome any move by the government to impose a moratorium on the death penalty, which is long overdue,” said Surendran.

He was commenting on a statement by Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz that a moratorium on the death penalty for drug trafficking offences might be imposed.

Mohamed Nazri said on Saturday this was due to the ongoing review by the Attorney-General’s Chambers of the mandatory death penalty for drug trafficking. The review is examining alternatives to the present mandatory death sentence, including extended jail terms.

It was reported that as of July this year, 640 of the more than 900 convicts on death row, were sentenced for drug offences.

On the death penalty for drug trafficking,

Surendran said the concerns were greater due to the presumptions stacked against an accused person, as the burden of proof is with the accused person and not the prosecution.

Malaysian Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights member Edmund Bon supported the call for an across-the-board moratorium on the death penalty.

He proposed that a Royal Commission of Inquiry be set up to review and analyse the effectiveness of the death penalty.

“The existing review on the death penalty is not sufficiently transparent and too narrow in scope,” said Bon.

Criminal defence counsel Sreekant Pillai hoped the moratorium would translate into the end of the death penalty. “A death sentence has not stopped people from committing offences,” he said.