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## Death penalty review for drug trafficking

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# Death penalty review for drug trafficking

> Section 39B amendment will give discretion to court

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government has agreed to review Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952 to allow for judges' discretion on cases involving the mandatory death penalty.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said said the cabinet meeting on March 1 decided for the amendment to be made on Section 39B to give discretionary powers to the court.

Azalina, who is the de facto law minister, added the cabinet came to the decision after a comprehensive study on death penalty in Malaysia was tabled by

Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohamed Apandi Ali during the cabinet meeting.

"The cabinet decided for the Act to be reviewed to allow judges to mete out other appropriate punishment.

"This is especially for cases where it is more reasonable for the offender to be given a jail sentence but the existing provisions do not allow for the judge to mete out punishment other than the death sentence," she told the Dewan Rakyat in her winding-up speech when debating the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's royal address.

Azalina, however, noted that the matter is still in its first phase, and the cabinet had instructed the Attorney-General's Chambers to study the amendment to Section 39B.

She said she had met the solicitor-

general II and requested for the study to be done as soon as possible.

"This is to allow for the amendment to be brought to Parliament after receiving approval from the cabinet," she added.

Opposition MPs reacted positively to Azalina's announcement although some had called for the same revision to be made on all Acts that carry the death penalty.

M. Kulasegaran (DAP-Ipoh Barat) commended the step taken by the government as revolutionary and served as a baby step to abolish the death sentence.

Ramkarpal Singh (DAP-Bukit Gelugor) asked whether the amendment would be retrospective in nature on other cases where the death penalty was meted out to offenders.

Azalina said details of the amendment had yet to be discussed by the cabinet.