

Govt agrees to scrap penalty for drugs

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THE government has agreed to scrap the mandatory death penalty for drug traffickers, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Azalina Othman said yesterday, in a move cautiously welcomed by rights groups.

Parliament must still approve the decision, taken by the Cabinet, to allow judges to impose sentences other than capital punishment on drug smugglers, but it is expected to do so, AFP reported.

Azalina revealed the decision to overhaul the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952 in response to a question in Parliament.

"We welcome the move as a recognition that the mandatory death penalty is an egregious form of punishment," said Amnesty International Malaysia executive director Shamini Darshni Kaliemuthu.

But she added that it "must only be considered a first step towards total abolition. The imposition of the death penalty, including the mandatory death penalty, is a violation of the right to life."

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