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Malaysian man faces imminent execution in Singapore after appeal fails

Singapore's president should grant clemency to a Malaysian man sentenced to be hanged for a drug-trafficking charge, Amnesty International said today.

The country's highest court dismissed Yong Vui Kong's final appeal on Monday, meaning that the 23-year-old could be executed in the coming days, unless President S.R. Nathan grants clemency, a request that he has previously rejected.

"Singapore has condemned this young man to the gallows based on drug laws that automatically presumed his guilt," said Donna Guest, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Deputy Director.

"The President should spare Yong Vui Kong's life without delay, and Singapore should review its heavy-handed drug laws and abolish the death penalty."

Yong Vui Kong was sentenced to death in January 2009 for trafficking 47 grams of heroin, a crime committed when he was 19 years old.

Under Singapore's drug laws, a defendant is automatically presumed guilty of drug trafficking in cases where possession of heroin exceeds two grams, and the death penalty is mandatory for cases involving more than 30 grams.

Yong Vui Kong's case has generated widespread concern in his native Malaysia, where Foreign Minister Anifah Aman and Malaysian legislators have pleaded with Singaporean officials for clemency.

"This young Malaysian's life is on the line. Malaysia's Foreign Minister should urgently ask Singapore to spare his life," said Donna Guest.