

Statement on the scheduled execution of Pannir Selvam Pranthaman

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA) is deeply concerned that Pannir Selvam Pranthaman ("Pannir") is scheduled to be executed in Singapore on 8 October 2025.

The High Court of Singapore convicted Pannir for drug trafficking as a courier in 2017 and he was given the mandatory death penalty. Pannir claimed that he had provided information to the police regarding the actual drug traffickers. However, the Public Prosecutor disagreed and did not issue the Certificate of Substantive Assistance under s.33B of the Misuse of Drugs Act (Cap 185, 2008 Rev. Ed.), which would have precluded the imposition of the death penalty. Pannir has also been denied clemency by the President of Singapore.

It has been recently reported that:

- (a) Between 2018 and 2025, four police reports have been lodged in Malaysia on persons believed to be responsible for trafficking the drugs that were found on Pannir in Singapore. These individuals are believed to have been part of a syndicate and are at large.
- (b) The Malaysian Police have started investigations.
- (c) There is no indication that the investigations have been concluded. Pannir is a material witness who could be crucial to any prosecution.

It would be a travesty if Pannir were to be executed before the investigations are completed, the alleged actual masterminds in the syndicate would escape.

The CLA notes that:

- Under Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a sentence of death "may be imposed only for the most serious crimes".
- While Singapore is not party to the ICCPR, customary international law principles regarding the protection of fundamental human rights apply universally.
- The UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions has noted that the imposition of mandatory death penalty is contrary to international human rights law as judges are deprived of the ability to consider mitigating circumstances of the convicted person, and, critically, that the death penalty should not be imposed for drug-related crimes as it does not meet the threshold of "the most serious crimes".

- The UN Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 36 on the right to life reinforces that drug-related offences can never serve as the basis for the imposition of the death penalty.
- 145 countries worldwide have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, reflecting a global trend toward abolition.

The CLA further notes that:

- Under Article 22P(1) of the Constitution of Singapore, the President has the power of clemency, pardon or reprieve of any offender.
- The power of clemency serves as a crucial safeguard against irreversible miscarriages of justice and allows for consideration of extraordinary circumstances, including ongoing criminal investigations that require the condemned person's cooperation.

While respecting Singapore's sovereignty and its administration of justice, the CLA emphasises that human rights obligations transcend borders, particularly within the Commonwealth family of nations.

Noting all the above and cognisant of the international rules and obligations applicable to all nations and the above-mentioned provision of the Constitution of Singapore, the CLA:

- Calls on the Government of Singapore to adhere to international human rights standards and obligations.
- Calls upon the President of Singapore to reconsider exercising the clemency powers under Article 22P(1) of the Constitution of Singapore in Pannir's case, with the aim of commuting his death sentence; and
- Urges the immediate suspension of the execution pending the completion of the Malaysian police investigations, in which Pannir is a potential crucial witness.

Commonwealth Lawyers Association

7th October 2025

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