

Mori to public: Don't shy from death penalty

Kyodo News

As a major judicial reform took effect Thursday, Justice Minister Eisuke Mori called on the public not to worry about serving as lay judges — even though they may have to hand down the death penalty — while welcoming public discussion on capital punishment.

"It is, in some sense, natural" to feel reluctant about handing down the death penalty," Mori said. "But the social order is maintained because of it and I would like the lay judges to participate in the system."

Speaking on the first day of the new judicial system, Mori also indicated he expects public discussion on the death penalty to increase.

"I think it would be something that we should welcome if awareness (of capital punishment) is raised and a national debate occurs," he said at a news conference.

Turning to the lifetime secrecy obligation for lay judges — a rule criticized by experts as excessive — Mori stressed that it does not prevent them from talking about they how they felt being a lay judge.

The law sets a maximum penalty of six months in prison or a ¥500,000 fine if lay judges leak certain information, such as what people said during closed-



Welcoming death debate: Justice Minister Eisuke Mori speaks during a news conference Thursday at the ministry. KYODO PHOTO

door deliberations to reach a verdict or a sentence. The obligation will continue even after they are released from service.

Under the new system, six citizens will examine serious criminal cases such as murder with three professional judges at district courts. The panels will not only determine the guilt or innocence of the defendant, but also the sentence, basically with a majority vote.

The Japan Times: Friday, May 22, 2009
(C) All rights reserved

[Go back to The Japan Times Online](#)

[Close window](#)