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Call to adopt draft Bill on contempt

IPOH, Sun. - The proposed Contempt of Court Bill submitted by the Bar Council should be adopted without altering its basic structure.

Perak Bar committee chairman A. Iruthaya Raj said the law would allay legitimate fears of the legal profession.

"Recent experience has shown the urgent need to define with more precision the meaning of contempt of court," he said in his speech at the Perak Bar committee annual dinner and dance at a hotel last night.

Retired Chief Judge of Malaya Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin was the guest-of-honour.

About 50 lawyers from southern Thailand were also invited for the event.

Iruthaya Raj said it was encouraging to hear Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad say that the Government intends to spell out what sort of statements or actions constitute contempt of court.

The Bar Council submitted the proposals two months ago following a spate of contempt of court proceedings in connection with high profile cases.

At present there is no codified law on the matter and judges use their discretion.

Iruthaya Raj said there was also a need to liberalise existing laws as the electronic media had transformed the world.

"Instant communication through the Internet has made laws meant to control the flow of information obsolete and irrelevant," he said.

He said the supremacy of the rule of law could only be assured if there existed a strong and independent Judiciary and Bar.

"A reaffirmation of faith in these institutions is therefore vital to dispel doubts and inspire public confidence," he said.

He said the excellent relationship between the Bench and the Bar seemed to have recently come under strain.

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