Lawyers to march against Sedition Act on Oct 16
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The Malaysian Bar today announced that its march against Sedition Act 1948 will be held on Oct 16.

The march, agreed upon by the Bar members at an extraordinary general meeting last month, is dubbed 'Walk for Peace and Freedom 2014'.

Malaysian Bar president Christopher Leong (right) said that the lawyers gather for the march at 10.30am at Padang Merbok, Kuala Lumpur, dressed in chamber attire.

He said the Bar believes that lasting peace, unity and mutual respect will be promoted through 'robust debate, diversity of opinion, and freedom of speech'.

"The Sedition Act 1948 is antithetical and counter-productive to these values, and to our aspirations for a better Malaysia.

"I call upon all members and pupils in chambers to please attend the walk and express your aspirations and support for a better Malaysia," he said in a statement today.

Calling for a repeal of the Act, he said Malaysia must be premised on "peace, harmony, unity, understanding and freedom from fear, intimidation, exploitation, oppression and extremism".

The Bar had previously led processions against police abuse and the Peaceful Assembly Bill 2011.

The 'Walk for Justice' was held in 2007 where 2,000 lawyers marched 3.5km to the Prime Minister's Department in Putrajaya demanding that a royal commission of inquiry be established to stem the slide in the judiciary.

The march succeeded in compelling then-prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to set up a royal commission of inquiry into the infamous Lingam Tape on appointment of judges.

'Freeze all action under the Act'

Meanwhile, anti-Sedition Act group Gerakan Mansuh Akta Hasutan (GHAH) said the government should impose a moratorium on further use of the Sedition Act 1948 until a constitutional matter is resolved at the High Court.

It urged a freeze by the police and the attorney-general following yesterday's decision of the sessions court in Kuala Lumpur to allow law lecturer Azmi Sharom to challenge the

constitutionality of the draconian law.

"Following this court's decision, we call on the police and the attorney-general to impose an immediate moratorium on the use of the Sedition Act on new cases.

"They should also stop pursuing existing cases until the constitutionality of the Sedition Act has been determined by the judiciary," GHAH spokesperson Yap Swee Seng said at a press conference today.

Azmi was previously charged under the Sedition Act for publishing an article titled 'Take Perak crisis route for speedy end to Selangor impasse, Pakatan told' on Aug 15, which the associate professor said was a statement made based on principles of law and democratic practices.

His lawyer Gobind Singh Deo had filed an application challenging the law's constitutionality on basis that the pre-independence law was enacted by the Law Revision Commission, and not the parliament.

The case will be mentioned at the Kuala Lumpur High Court on Nov 7 while the hearing at the Sessions Court has been suspended pending its verdict, since constitutional matters can only be heard at the high courts and above.

'Probe torture allegations'

On a related matter, Amnesty International Malaysia executive director Shamini Darshni said although student activist Ali Abdul Jalil had been released on bail, his allegations of torture should still be investigated.

Ali was previously released and immediately re-arrested on four occasions for various charges or investigations under the Sedition Act, and reportedly claimed to have been tortured while detained at Sungai Buloh prison.

Amnesty International has adopted him as a 'prisoner of conscience' and launched a global campaign calling for his release. He was ultimately released on Sept 29 after spending 22 days in detention.

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