

## **Anwar's lawyers cry foul over rejection**

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Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's lawyers believe that the rejection of the incarcerated leader's request to attend Parliament is both "arbitrary and unlawful".

The lawyers, PKR's N Surendran and Latheefa Koya, said the refusal was "completely unacceptable and obstructive" of the functioning of the Dewan Rakyat.

"Shockingly, no reasons whatsoever were given for the refusal; it was a point-blank rejection.

"This failure to even give reasons renders the decision arbitrary and unlawful," they added in a statement.

The duo confirmed that they received a letter from Prisons Department director-general Zulkifli Omar rejecting Anwar's request to attend Parliament.

"The home minister has evidently chosen to reply through the commissioner general, who is a civil servant and by law answerable to the minister," the said.

On Feb 25, the lawyers made a formal application to Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi on behalf of Anwar.

Both Surendran and Latheefa further pointed out that Anwar was still the legitimate opposition parliamentary leader and Permatang Pauh MP.

"The position of opposition leader is legally and constitutionally recognised and is a key part of our parliamentary democracy.

"It is high-handed of the Home Ministry to deny Anwar's voice in parliament without even giving any reasons," they said.

They further stressed that Anwar must be in parliament to attend and debate the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's speech next week, as well as to lead the opposition in checking the executive and safeguarding public interest.

"Zahid and the government must respect democracy, and the Dewan Rakyat as the nation's highest legislative body," they said.

The opening of the next parliamentary session will be on March 9.

PKR previously argued that Anwar should be allowed to attend the new parliament session, since a royal pardon application has been made and as such, he remains as the opposition leader and Permatang Pauh MP until the Pardons Board makes a decision.

Anwar is currently serving a five-year prison sentence following his sodomy conviction.

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