

Gov't can disrespect judiciary, but not others

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COMMENT The government is currently pushing for amendments to the Sedition Act that would ironically make it permissible to insult the judiciary.

Under the bill, it will no longer be considered a seditious tendency if someone “brings into hatred, contempt or dissatisfaction against the courts”.

But the amendment may be totally unnecessary.

After all, there is the Federal Court hearing of Universiti Malaya professor Azmi Sharom's (left) challenge that the Sedition Act violates the federal constitution which guarantees freedom of speech.

All sedition cases have been stayed pending the possibly ground-breaking outcome of Azmi's case.

Then, there is de facto law minister Nancy Shukri's comments on Tuesday.

Nancy had conceded that amending the Sedition Act while it is being reviewed by the Federal Court could be construed as being disrespectful of the judiciary.

However, she argued it wasn't illegal to disrespect the judiciary, which means it is not a crime to do so.

“Yes, it may be a case of disrespecting the Federal Court review, but disrespecting is not against the law, and this is just an opinion, an interpretation,” the minister told reporters in response to a bid by Pakatan to block the Sedition Act amendments.

Shouldn't gov't charge itself?

So it is perfectly fine to disrespect the judiciary without having to amend the Sedition Act - that is, if you're the government.

If you're anybody else, take for instance political cartoonist Zunar, then you would still be looking at jail time.

Zunar, the nom de plume of Zulkiflee Anwar Ulhaque, is facing up to 43 years in jail after being charged with nine counts of sedition.

Why the record number of charges? Because he posted nine tweets criticising the judiciary for the jailing of Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

To be clear, I'm not a fan of Zunar. But I have read his tweets, and correct me if I'm wrong, but what he did can be interpreted the same way as what the government is doing now, which is disrespecting the courts.

So is it illegal or not, Nancy?

If it isn't, then shouldn't the attorney-general drop all charges against Zunar?

But if it is, and since the Sedition Act hasn't been amended yet, shouldn't the government charge itself for sedition for trying to amend the law while it is under judicial review?

Oh, what a paradox that would be indeed.

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