

**Bar Council says homosexuals free to speak up**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Lisa J. Ariffin**

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 24 — The Malaysian Bar Council refuted today Utusan Malaysia's claims that it supports homosexuality but backed the freedom of expression "minorities who face discrimination, abuse and persecution for their sexual identity.

An Utusan Malaysia bureau chief's column in the Malay daily questioned why the Bar Council "supported" homosexuality among Malaysians, calling it part of a "deviant wave" that is fast gaining acceptance throughout the world.

But Bar Council president Lim Chee Wee (picture) told The Malaysian Insider "Utusan's claims are irrelevant."

"We would not support same-sex marriage but we support freedom of expression, even for (Perkasa president Datuk) Ibrahim Ali despite not agreeing with him," he said, referring to the leader of the right-wing Malay rights NGO.

Lim said section 377 of the Penal Code bars both anal and oral sex without any distinction with regards to sexuality.

"Penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual connection necessary to the offence described in this section. What is clear is that this provision does not draw a distinction between homosexual and heterosexual activity," he said.

He added that the Bar Council "supports the freedom of expression and assembly by a group of minorities who face discrimination, abuse and persecution for their sexual and gender identity."

Section 377 provides that "any person who has sexual connection with another person by the introduction of the penis into the anus or mouth of the other person is said to commit carnal intercourse against the order of nature."

Lim said that as heterosexual adults engage in oral and anal sex, such a law presented a "moral hypocrisy."

Noraini Razak, who was a news editor at the Malay daily until last month, accused the lawyers today of supporting gays, lesbians and transgendered people despite Malaysia being among 70 out of a total of 195 countries which banned homosexuality.

"It is honestly very strange when this deviant wave, which is being defended by this group (Seksualiti Merdeka) as a human right, gets the direct and indirect support from many local NGOs, including the Bar Council," she wrote in her column.

Umno's Utusan Malaysia also recently accused Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim of supporting homosexuality during an interview with BBC.

In the interview, the BBC reporter had reportedly asked Anwar whether he was prepared to push for the idea of anti-discrimination as far as gay rights were concerned, to which he had allegedly said "we will have to review some of our archaic laws."

"We Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia generally believe and are committed to support the sanctity of marriage between men and women, but we should not be seen to be punitive and consider the archaic law as relevant," Anwar had told BBC.

But he had also pointed out that Pakatan Rakyat (PR) did not support homosexuality, an excerpt of the interview which Utusan Malaysia did not include.

Anwar is now demanding a total of RM150 million in damages from the Umno daily for allegedly tarnishing his reputation in an article accusing him of being a gay rights proponent.

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