

Why support gays, Utusan columnist asks Bar Council
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 24 — A bureau chief at Umno's Utusan Malaysia questioned today why the Bar Council "supported" homosexuality among Malaysians, calling it part of a "deviant wave" that is fast gaining acceptance throughout the world.

Noraini Razak, who was a news editor at the Malay daily until last month, accused the lawyers 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 today.

Seksualiti Merdeka, a movement championing the freedom of sexual orientation and gender identity, was not allowed by the authorities to hold the festival last year despite having held it annually since 2008.

Its organiser filed a judicial review earlier this month against the ban, saying it is "absolutely unconstitutional, illegal and undemocratic".

Noraini, who is now Putrajaya bureau chief, quoted academic Professor Salleh Buang as saying that "among the 12,000 law practitioners active in this country, surely there are many Muslims. Why have they not made their voices heard?"

"Salleh's question is can this country continue to uphold its beliefs from being affected by this deviant wave? If so, for how long, especially with the emergence of active groups demanding that sodomy be excluded from the list of heavy offences in the Penal Code?"

"There is also internal support from among our country's legal experts. What about support for the government in tackling this wave, this deviant movement?" the editorial asked.

Utusan recently accused Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim of supporting homosexuality during an interview with BBC.

In the said 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 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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