

Now, focus shifts to retired Sri Ram as Anwar's defence lawyer
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Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram's appearance in the Federal Court as Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's defence lawyer has caused a stir among a group of lawyers and individuals who are questioning a Malaysian Bar resolution which prohibited ex-judges from appearing as counsel.

The group, who included lawyer Datuk Zulkifli Noordin, wants the Bar Council to take a stand on the position of the retired Sri Ram who is leading Anwar's defence team in the sodomy appeal.

They said a resolution was passed by the Malaysian Bar in its annual general meeting last March in response to Sri Ram, a former Federal Court judge, from acting in a constitutional case.

"Yesterday and suddenly out of the blue, we hear that Sri Ram has agreed to act for Anwar and the Malaysian Bar president maintains a deafening silence," the statement said.

It said the Bar's stand could only be described as hypocritical in the face of the actions of Sri Ram and that the Bar failed to comply with their own resolution.

"We urge the Bar to issue a statement in line with the resolution passed. The Bar's silence is a contradiction of their own commitment to uphold justice without fear or favour.

"It is not proper for the Bar Council to have two sets of principles that differ when Anwar is involved. The credibility of the legal profession is surely tarnished by such hypocritical actions," the group said in the statement.

In September last year, the Federal Court ruled that retired judges could come to court to represent their clients and any attempt to stop them ran foul of Article 5 of the Federal Constitution which guarantees the right of livelihood.

This ruling was made when a construction company had attempted to stop Sri Ram from acting as counsel.

A five-man bench chaired by Tan Sri Raus Sharif then noted that the Legal Profession Act did not prevent any advocate or solicitor, be he a retired judge, from appearing in any court.

The law stated that any person who is on the roll and in possession of practising certificate has to the right to appear.

Bar Council chairman Christopher Leong, who had in the past expressed reservation about retired judges coming to court, also acknowledged the present status quo remained unless the law was amended. – October 29, 2014.

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