

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT GEORGETOWN PENANG  
REFERENCE PROCEEDINGS  
IN THE MEMORY OF DEPARTED MEMBERS  
OF THE PENANG BAR**

**SPEECH BY**

**YANG ARIF TUAN MOHD RADZI B ABDUL HAMID**

**JUDGE**

**HIGH COURT MELAKA**

**(PRESIDING IN HIGH COURT GEORGETOWN, PENANG)**

**10<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**

Good morning to all present,

I feel specially and deeply privileged and honored to preside over this morning's proceedings at the invitation of the Penang Bar Committee in respect of departed members who had appeared before me when I served as Judge on the Criminal Bench of the High Court of Georgetown.

Today's proceedings is my first since I was appointed to the Bench of the High Court of Malaya and it is therefore an event that is equally significant and important to me as much as it is to the families and friends of the departed members. Today's proceedings is also particularly close to my heart because one of the departed members was a friend whom I had known since our younger days as law students and fellow college mates at University

Malaya. I therefore come to Georgetown carrying with me a certain sense of trust and duty to deliver a speech that will adequately and justly pay tribute to them as members of the legal profession and for one of them, additionally, as a friend.

Before I begin the main part of my speech, I would like to first acknowledge the presence of Tuan Mohd Azhar bin Hamzah, representative of Attorney General's Chambers, Mr Lee Guan Tong representative of the Bar Council of Malaysia and Madam Gowri Subaiyyah, representative of the Penang Bar Committee. In particular, I also wish to acknowledge the presence of Thanagesvaran a/l M Krishnasamy, Mr Hussaini bin Abdul Rashid, Mr Ahmad Munawir Abd Aziz and Mr Ravi Chandran who have taken the time to attend and speak in honor of the following departed members of the Penang Bar:

1. Mr. Sankra Krishnan a/l S Rama;
2. Mr Rethinakumar a/l Subramaniam
3. Dato Syahril Rezwan bin Abdullah; and
4. Dato' Ranjit Sigh s/o Mahinder Singh.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Permit me to begin by saying that one thing is certain when each of us is born, that is we will one day meet our own moment of death. That is the universal law of impermanence that applies to all creations as destined by God Almighty as a sign that nothing other than Him is Ever Eternal and Present.

Whilst we all accept the reality that we, our parents, siblings, families and friends will one day be removed from this earthly presence, yet death is something that we can never truly be prepared for. For that reason, we

cannot really escape from feeling the deep sense of loss, sadness and longing when someone dear to us passes on, whether suddenly or even when we think we are prepared for it in situations where the deceased had passed due to some long fatal illness. The humanity in us will grieve and mourn however much we try to resist it. A sense of loss will creep into our hearts and souls not only because we were bonded with the deceased by some relationship but essentially because we are all connected as souls that came from the great mystery of creation.

But death is not just about loss. It is also about realization. The realization of how much the departed meant to us, how much we loved them, how little was said about how much we loved them and how much more we could and should have done to show that love.

As said by Kahlil Gibran, the famous Lebanese poet,  
*“Love knows not its depth until the hour of separation”*.

Then there is also the realization of how the departed was connected to us in other ways, how their presence in our lives and others had helped shape who we are and the realization of the legacy they left behind – the life lessons learnt from them, their devotion to their faith and families, their deeds, their service to the community and their achievements in their chosen professions.

Those realizations lead us to the understanding that each of us come to this world not only to serve the role of living our lives the best we can but also to serve the roles that we have been destined to play in the lives of others such as our parents, siblings, children, families, friends and colleagues. Thus, as much as we are here to write the story of our own lives, we are also here to be

part of the life story of others – be it as a parent, a child, a sibling, a student, a friend, a spouse, a teacher, a shoulder to cry on, an inspiration to others and also as a member of a profession from which others derive benefit.

Therefore, there is really no coincidence in life, we are where we are supposed to be and who we are supposed to be at the appointed time. And so was our departed family and friends.

Each of them not only led their lives as an individuals but also had their own roles to play in the lives of their families and friends and in their chosen career. As far as their profession as lawyers is concerned they served their roles to act the best they can in the interest of their clients in accordance with the law.

Thus, we gather here today not only to solemnly mourn the passing of a family member, a friend and a lawyer but also to cherish the beautiful memories that each of us may have had with them and to express our recognition of their respective contribution to the practice of law in the state of Penang.

We have heard from each of the deceased's family representatives on aspects of their personal and professional lives and I am moved by the love, admiration and respect given to each of them.

For me personally, Dato' Ranjit was a friend. He was 1 year junior in the Law Faculty University Malaya and we were fellow college mates in the First College. He was an avid sportsman, in particular rugby. Rugby boys were and are known anywhere for their strong sense of

comradery and their boisterous and rustic fun and boy, did Ranjit have fun back then.

I recall those days when Ranjit wanted to go on dates and my pass me down green VW Beatle number JG 721 would become his Cadillac. I was glad that he paid for the car's petrol and each time the car came back it was in one piece with no unsavory traces in the back seat.

Ranjit had a great sense of humor and he was full of life. I was thoroughly glad that when I was posted to Penang as a Judicial Commissioner I got reacquainted with Ranjit after many years of lost contact. He was the same Ranjit I knew, only now he was a Dato and a successful and highly reputable criminal lawyer, practicing his craft all the way up to the Federal Court. Despite that Ranjit conducted himself professionally at all times, according

me the respect that a lawyer is expected to give to a Judge.

I was under immense pressure to overcome the sharp learning curve in discharging my duties as a newly appointed Judicial Commissioner sitting on the Criminal Bench and I was lucky to have learnt a lot on criminal law and practice from Ranjit through the trials he conducted before me. I am indebted to him.

What I miss most about Ranjit is his laughs. They were loud but affable and unmistakably Ranjit. Ranjit was serious and focused in his trials but outside that he was a gregarious man. I would always hear his laughs from my chambers when he was sharing some funny moments with fellow lawyers and the Prosecution. His laughter was his signal that he was present in Court.

I had noticed that Ranjit had gradually lost weight and became slow in his movements. He was becoming less of himself. One day I asked him in my chambers, “*Dato, are you okay, you don’t look well*” He replied saying he was fine. Only later I found out he wasn’t and not long after Ranjit passed. I was shocked and sad to lose a friend and a criminal lawyer of high caliber. My Court became quieter after because Ranjit’s laughters was no more to be heard.

As for Mr Rethinakumar, I must say that he was one of the gentlest human beings I have ever come across. He was always respectful, soft spoken and hardly ever raised his voice in Court. But those qualities did not in any way disadvantage him in any of the matters he conducted before me. He knew his law and he was always confident in arguing his case. We met occasionally when I stopped at Anandha Bhavan for my

occasional dosay and masala tea and he was always a man with a pleasant smile and demeanour.

Mr Sankara did not appear much before me but I recall in one case he had given his best to argue for the respondent in an appeal. He argued passionately for his client. That case was reported as ***PP v Mohamd Ibrahim bin Rosli [2019] MLJU 1281.***

Whilst I did not know Mr Sankara and Dato' Syahril Rezwan at a personal level, I must say however, that after hearing the speeches on both of them, I have no cause to not share wholeheartedly all the positive sentiments expressed of them. It is perhaps my loss that I did not have the opportunity to know them better.

To all present today, I am honored and proud to state that that each of the departed member had

demonstrated their commitment, determination and passion to the best version of themselves and in their pursuit for excellence as lawyers to serve their clients to the best of their ability. They were indeed exemplary members of the Penang Bar. It was not a coincidence. It was their destiny to become who they were and where they were at the appointed time and moment.

Therefore, on behalf of the Judiciary, I express our heartfelt and sincere condolences on the passing of Mr Sankara Krishna, Mr Rethinakumar, Dato' Syahril Rezwan and Dato' Ranjit Singh. Our thoughts and prayers are always with them and may God Almighty rest their souls.

Their passing need not be a loss and their end in the story of our lives but just a turn in its pages. It will be up to us to keep them alive in our hearts and through our

fond memories of them. To quote a Middle Eastern proverb: *“Say not in grief: “He is no more”, but live in thankfulness that he was”*.

Before I conclude my speech permit me to read a poem entitled *“When I Die”* by the great sufi poet *Jalaluddin Rumi*. In this poem Rumi celebrates death as a journey towards eternal life and a moment that should not be grieved.

**When I Die**

***Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi***

*When I die  
when my coffin  
is being taken out  
You must never think  
I am missing this world*

*Don't shed any tears  
don't lament or  
feel sorry  
I'm not falling  
into a monster's abyss  
when you see  
my corpse is being carried  
don't cry for my leaving  
not leaving  
i'm arriving at eternal love*

*When you leave me  
in the grave  
don't say goodbye  
remember a grave is  
only a curtain  
for the paradise behind*

*You'll only see me  
descending into a grave*

*now watch me rise  
how can there be an end  
when the sun sets or  
the moon goes down*

*It looks like the end  
it seems like a sunset  
but in reality it is a dawn  
when the grave locks you up  
that is when your soul is freed*

*Have you ever seen  
a seed fallen to earth  
not rise with a new life  
why should you doubt the rise  
of a seed named human*

*Have you ever seen  
a bucket lowered into a well  
coming back empty*

*why lament for a soul  
when it can come back  
like Joseph from the well*

*When for the last time  
you close your mouth  
your words and soul  
will belong to the world of  
no place no time*

With that, I wish each of you a happy and full life and may we carry with us the fond memories of our departed family and friend.

To the Penang Bar Committee I wish to express my deepest appreciation for having sought permission from the Chief Judge of Malaya for me to preside over today's proceedings. I am truly humbled.

I hereby order that the record of today's proceedings be preserved and kept in the archives of this Court and that a copy be sent to the families of those remembered today.

I further order that on application by the Penang Bar Committee, a copy of the CRT recording of today's proceedings be made available to the Committee so that copies of the same can be made and distributed to each of the departed member's family for posterity and for the archive of the Penang Bar.

Thank you all for your presence. **Court is hereby adjourned.**

-----