

## **Anwar's objection frivolous and pathetic, says Zaid**

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**By RK Anand**

A former law minister has welcomed the Attorney-General's Chambers' move to appoint Muhammad Shafee Abdullah to lead the prosecution team in the Sodomy II appeal.

On the same note, Zaid Ibrahim, who once owned the country's biggest legal firm, dismissed Anwar Ibrahim's objection to the appointment as "frivolous", "bizarre" and "pathetic".

NONE"The AG's office seldom outsources prosecution work. But it is a good start. In other countries, it is normal for the prosecution to hire the best counsel to handle certain matters.

"I am of the opinion that our AG's Chambers is bloated.... too many people doing too many things, it is not easy to find the best lawyers to work for you.

"I am not defending Shafee, I am just pointing out the facts," Zaid told Malaysiakini.

Responding to a question, the former PKR leader said there could be two reasons behind the objection.

The first, he said, Anwar could be rattled since Shafee was a competent lawyer and second, it served as a delaying tactic.

"When you object, there would be another hearing to decide on the matter, and so it delays the appeal proceedings," he explained.

'I don't see the merit'

Dismissing Anwar's contention on the grounds of prejudice, Zaid pointed out that it lacked basis.

NONE"I don't see the merit of their objection. Shafee (left) is not a judge. He is a lawyer. If you allow this sort of objections, then everyone can object to a lawyer, saying he or she dislikes me.

"If this is allowed, then it would set a bad precedent and justice would come to a

halt. This objection has no relevance," he added.

On the perception that Shafee was a pro-Umno lawyer, Zaid cited a hypothetical scenario.

"Let us say the AG appointed me to head the prosecution. Then the argument would be that I was formerly in PKR and there was a fallout (with Anwar).

"There would be no end to excuses," he stressed.

Zaid withdrew from the contest for the PKR deputy presidency and accused the party polls of being rigged. He then quit the party.

The AG's Chambers filed the Sodomy II appeal based on nine grounds on July 10 last year, while Shafee was only appointed on July 2, which would suggest that it was unlikely that he had prepared the appeal.

This morning, the Court of Appeal adjourned the hearing on the prosecution's appeal against Anwar's acquittal as the lead counsel Karpal Singh had been hospitalised. The three-member bench fixed Aug 1 for case management.

The opposition leader has been maintaining that the sodomy allegations against him are part of a political conspiracy, a charge the ruling politicians have denied.

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