

PKR: Shafee entrenched in Umno, can't be fair in appeal
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Muhammad Shafee Abdullah is far too entrenched in Umno to be able to administer justice as a prosecutor properly, says PKR vice-president N Surendran.

Legal ethics dictate that prosecuting counsel must regard themselves as "ministers of justice and not to struggle for a conviction" and conduct cases "moderately", Surendran said in a press statement today.

He argued that Shafee had acted on behalf of key Umno leaders against Anwar in civil cases and was allegedly part of a "special assignment" for Najib Abdul Razak and his wife Rosmah Mansor.

Coupled with the fact that Umno and Najib were "implacable political enemies of Anwar and Pakatan Rakyat", Surendran said it was undeniable that the government and Umno were out to destroy Pakatan by any means necessary.

"In such circumstances, how can attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail justify appointing Umno-linked Shafee as lead prosecutor?" asked Surendran, who is also a lawyer and Padang Serai MP.

Objections raised

Shafee is currently representing Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin in a defamation suit brought by Anwar. Shafee had also represented the "Datuk T" trio - Shazryl Eskay Abdullah, Shuaib Lazim and Abdul Rahim Thamby Chik - who publicly screened a sex video depicting a man resembling Anwar.

It was also once alleged that Shafee acted for Najib and Rosmah on a "special assignment" entailing visits to New York, London, Dubai and possibly Paris in April last year to talk to witnesses.

Shafee has brushed off these allegations as "utter rubbish".

It was revealed in 2008 that Najib and Shafee had exchanged a series of phone text messages in late 2006 over Abdul Razak Baginda, who was once Najib's confidante and was charged with abetting two police personnel in the murder of Altantuya Shaariibuu.

The hearing for the government's appeal against Anwar's Sodomy II acquittal was scheduled to begin this morning, but it was postponed because defence counsel Karpal Singh is hospitalised.

However, it was revealed that Shafee was appointed as lead prosecutor, prompting the defence to raise an objection. Justice Ramly Ali, who heads the three-member Court of Appeal bench, said the matter should only be raised during the hearing proper.

Attorney-General Abdul Gani Patail when contacted about the controversy surrounding Shafee's appointment declined to comment on the matter.

"The matter is being argued as such it is prudent for me in the interest of justice not to comment at this time," Gani said in a text message.

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