

Anwar wants to remove syariah lawyer in appeal case

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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 18 — Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim filed an application today to strike out the syariah lawyer representing three respondents in his Islamic criminal defamation complaint against them, citing unethical reasons and conflict of interests.

“Since 2008 in the qazaf (criminal defamation) issue, minister Jamil Khir had given instructions to stop the prosecution proceeding. He had urged that the civil case goes on but not the syariah case.

“We also found that the lawyer used to represent the respondents was paid with zakat money,” Anwar (picture) told reporters at the Federal Territory syariah High Court here after filing the application.

The opposition leader had filed an application in January 2010 to compel the syariah High Court to prosecute his former aide Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan after the prosecution failed to proceed with the criminal case.

Anwar had filed for criminal defamation or “qazaf” against Saiful after the former aide had accused Anwar of sodomy.

The three respondents in the application are the Federal Territory chief prosecutor, Federal Territory Islamic Department (Jawi) director Datuk Che Mat Che Ali and Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom.

Anwar had claimed that Che Mat and Jamil Khir are trying to sabotage the case.

Today, Anwar filed an application to reject the respondents’ syariah lawyer Datuk Zainul Rijal Abu Bakar from representing them in his appeal case because “he had acted unprofessionally and there is a conflict of interest”.

“He is also not honest and failed to act professionally and went against the syariah lawyers’ ethics,” he said.

Anwar claimed that the lawyer’s fees issued by the Jawi director were from the Federal Territory Islamic Council’s zakat funds and were approved by Datuk Mashitah Ibrahim, the deputy minister in the Prime Minister’s Office, and this was against syariah law, thus affecting the lawyer’s credibility.

One of the lawyers representing Anwar, Kamarainiah Kamaruzaman, told reporters that the fees from the zakat funds, which were meant for poor Muslims, amounted to RM32,000.

She cited the figure from the debate during a parliamentary session on June 21 this year.

“We want the syariah court proceedings to start. That’s the most important. We have repeatedly asked for this. It’s been three years and the case hasn’t even started.

“So you talk on the need to respect Islam, to respect syariah law. But you have completely ignored the process for political reasons. It is a clear direction by the political masters and in this case, what is worse is the abuse of zakat funds,” Anwar said.

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