

Anwar's legal team will challenge Shafee's appointment as lead prosecutor
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Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's legal team will file a formal application to disqualify Umno lawyer Datuk Seri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah from representing the public prosecutor in the sodomy appeal.

Lead counsel Karpal Singh said the application would be accompanied by an affidavit from Anwar himself detailing why Shafee should be barred from undertaking the task of an ad-hoc deputy public prosecutor in this appeal.

"We do not mind any other lawyer, but not Shafee," Karpal told The Malaysian Insider in a telephone interview from the Kuala Lumpur Hospital where he is warded for a back pain.

The veteran lawyer said he was prepared to take on Shafee over legal arguments in a court of law but not in this case due to exceptional circumstances.

"The Attorney-General (Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail) can come personally to argue the case. We have no problems with that," he said, adding that in the past Gani had appeared in court for the government in high profile civil cases.

Meanwhile, PKR vice-president N. Surendran said it was shocking and highly unusual for the Umno lawyer to lead the prosecution team in the Sodomy II appeal.

Shafee is currently acting as counsel in numerous civil cases for key Umno leaders against Anwar.

"More seriously, last year it was revealed that Shafee had written a letter to court stating that he was on a special assignment overseas on behalf of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his wife Rosmah Mansor.

"It is a known fact that Umno and Najib are implacable political enemies of Anwar and Pakatan Rakyat.

"It is also undeniable that the government and Umno have tried every kind of tactic to undermine and destroy Anwar and Pakatan, including using oppressive laws such as the Sedition Act and Peaceful Assembly Act to prosecute and jail Pakatan leaders," said Surendran who is also MP for Padang Serai.

He said in these circumstances, the AG cannot justify appointing the Umno lawyer as lead prosecutor.

Surendran pointed out that ethical rules state that the prosecuting counsel must "regard themselves as ministers of justice, and not to struggle for a conviction" and conduct the case "moderately".

"How can the public have any confidence that the prosecution is being conducted fairly when the lead prosecutor Shafee is representing Najib, Rosmah and other top Umno leaders?" he asked.

Surendran said with this development, the AG has once again proved he is incapable of acting fairly towards Anwar and Pakatan leaders.

"Umno must stop using the criminal justice system to silence and undermine Malaysia's political opposition," Surendran added. - July 22, 2013

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