

**Gopal's Appointment As Anwar's Counsel Against M'sian Bar's Resolution - Gerakan Youth Chief
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 29 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Bar should clarify why retired Federal Court Judge Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram has been allowed to represent opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in his sodomy appeal.

Gerakan youth chief Tan Keng Liang in a statement here today said the matter was against the resolution passed by the Bar earlier this year, whereby it had at its annual general meeting on March 15 agreed that retired higher court judges should be prohibited from representing clients in court.

"This is clearly contrary to the resolution by the Malaysian Bar earlier this year," he said.

He said according to the Bar, if such practice was allowed, it may have adverse effects like intimidating the Bench and worse, it could give the perception that the said retired judge/counsel and his client have an advantage over other counsel and adversaries.

"Gerakan Youth urges the Malaysian Bar to clarify whether there was any special exception granted to Anwar to be represented by an ex-Federal Court judge.

"As was argued by the Malaysian Bar to justify their resolution, this matter may affect the public perception as to the administration of justice in our country," he said.

However, in September last year, the Federal Court had ruled that a retired Federal Court judge can act as counsel in civil matters.

The five-man panel chaired by Court of Appeal President Justice Rauf Sharif ruled that this is in line with the provision under Article 5 of the Federal Constitution which guarantees the right of a citizen to earn a living.

Sri Ram is one of the lawyers in the defence team of Anwar who has appealed to the Federal Court to overturn the Appeals Court decision which had found Anwar, who is also Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) advisor and Member of Parliament for Permatang Pauh, guilty of sodomising Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan, his former aide, at a condominium unit in Bukit Damasara here on June 26, 2008.

The prosecution had appealed to the Appeals Court after the High Court acquitted Anwar on the sodomy charge after the defence's case.

Sodomy is a criminal case.

The apex court started hearing Anwar's appeal yesterday.

Meanwhile, commenting on the matter, senior lawyer Tan Sri Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, who is leading the prosecution team in the appeal hearing, said in his opinion, retired judges were free to practice as advocate and solicitors.

"It is also their right to represent whoever they wish," he told reporters here.

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