

12 MAY 1999

Court-Anwar (Mahathir)

COURT TOLD OF PM'S INTENTION TO STRIKE OUT ANWAR'S RM100 MLN SUIT

KUALA LUMPUR, May 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will make an application to the High Court here to strike out a RM100 million suit brought against him by his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Counsel Datuk Mohamed Adnan Shuaib, who appeared for Dr Mahathir, told Justice Datuk R.K.Nathan of the prime minister's intention to do so when the case was called up for the first time for case management today.

Mohamed Adnan said Dr Mahathir would also apply to amend his statement of defence which was filed on March 22 and they needed two months to do so.

Nathan then fixed July 12 for case management of the suit.

However, he said, in the meantime, if there was any interlocutory application before the court, then the court would deal with it first and the date for case management would be fixed later.

Earlier, the court ordered counsel M. Manoharan to apply for summons for directions after being informed that the case was up for case management.

Later, Manoharan informed reporters that he filed the summons for direction today.

Anwar, 51, who is also former minister of finance, claimed that Dr Mahathir slandered him in a news conference held at the Prime Minister's Department on Sept 22, last year.

In his amended statement of claim, Anwar said Dr Mahathir had falsely and maliciously spoken to local and foreign journalists of matters concerning him in his conduct as deputy prime minister.

Anwar contended that the publication of the offending words had caused grave injury to his character, credit and reputation both nationally and internationally.

In his statement of defence, Dr Mahathir said the alleged defamatory words were published in his capacity as Prime Minister of Malaysia on an occasion of qualified privilege.

Anwar, in his reply said the defence of qualified privilege is not open to Dr Mahathir and that the prime minister cannot rely on the defence of qualified privilege because he, in uttering and causing to be published, and republished, both nationally and internationally, the offending words, had acted maliciously and in bad faith.

Apart from the RM100 million in damages, costs and other reliefs deemed fit and proper by the court, Anwar is also seeking an injunction to restrain Dr Mahathir from further making any defamatory statements against him.

He is also suing Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd, seeking another RM100 million in damages for libel over the article published in its newspaper following a suit against the prime minister.

Anwar, who was sacked from the cabinet on Sept 2, 1998 is serving a six-year jail term after conviction by the High Court on four counts of corrupt practice on April 14 and one of his sodomy case is to be heard on June 7.

-- BERNAMA

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