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Defamation suit: Aug 2 hearing for Dr M's application

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The High Court fixed Aug 2 to hear an application by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to strike out a defamation suit against him by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Judge Datuk Dr Kamalanathan Ratnam set the date when the matter was mentioned today.

In his suit, Anwar claimed, among others, that the Prime Minister had on Sept 22 "falsely and maliciously" spoken to local and foreign reporters accusing him of committing immoral acts.

Dr Mahathir, in his statement of defence, contended that he had spoken the words in his capacity as the Prime Minister on an occasion of qualified privilege.

In his affidavit-in-support filed for the application to strike out the suit, Dr Mahathir said the statement he made about Anwar on Sept 22 was already public knowledge.

Anwar, in the affidavit-in-reply, said Dr Mahathir's application was defective and said his claim was with merit and based on serious issues to be tried by the court.

Earlier (in court), Dr Mahathir's lawyer Datuk Mohd Adnan Shuaib said the application had been fixed for mention before the court today by the senior assistant registrar (Norliza Othman).

He said Norliza had disqualified herself from hearing the application as she had taken a confession by Dr Munawar Ahmad Anees, who was Anwar's former speech writer.

(Munawar was jailed six months on Sept 19 for allowing Anwar to sodomise him.)

Counsel Karpal Singh, for Anwar, sought that the application be heard in early August.

Also appearing for Dr Mahathir are Cecil Abraham and N. Chandran.

(END)