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Dr M applies to strike out libel suit

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has applied to strike out a RM100 million libel suit filed against him by sacked Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The application under Order 18 Rule 19 of the Rules of the High Court was filed by Dr Mahathir through Shearn Delamore and Co yesterday.

It will be heard on June 10.

In a related issue, the High Court will also hear on June 21 a summons in chambers filed by Dr Mahathir for leave to amend his statement of defence.

The summons, filed on May 19, stated that the reason for the application was based on Order 20 Rule 5 of the Rules of High Court 1980 which allows a party to apply for amendment at any stage of a proceeding.

Dr Mahathir will contend that the amendments were bona fide and would not prejudice Anwar.

In his suit filed on Jan 25, Anwar claimed, among others, that Dr Mahathir had on Sept 22 last year "falsely and maliciously" spoken to local and foreign reporters accusing him of committing immoral acts.

Anwar claimed Dr Mahathir had spoken the words knowing that and/or with the intention that it would be published by local and international print and electronic media, including The Sun, Newsweek and CNN International, and re-published elsewhere.

In his statement of defence filed on March 22, Dr Mahathir contended that he had spoken the words in his capacity as Prime Minister on an occasion of qualified privilege.

In his 26-page defence, Dr Mahathir, who is relying on Section 8 of the Defamation Act 1952, said a Press conference was held on Sept 22, last year, two days after Anwar was arrested and detained under the Internal Security Act during which he was asked about the event.

He denied that the words were defamatory or bore the meanings claimed by Anwar, contending that they "are true in substance and facts".

The case management of the suit has been fixed for July 12.

(END)