

25 MAY 1999

Court-Anwar (Mahathir)

PM APPLIES TO STRIKE OUT ANWAR'S RM100 MIL DEFAMATION SUIT

KUALA LUMPUR, May 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has filed an application to strike out a RM100 million defamation suit brought against him by his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The application was filed at the Civil High Court registry office here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir has also applied for leave to amend his statement of defence on May 19 and the court fixed June 21 for the matter to be heard by Justice Datuk Dr R.K. Nathan.

Anwar, 51, claimed that Dr Mahathir slandered him in a news conference held at the Prime Minister's Department on Sept 22, last year.

He claimed that Dr Mahathir had falsely and maliciously spoken to local and foreign journalists of matters concerning him in his conduct as deputy prime minister and 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 was not open to Dr Mahathir.

He said the prime minister could not rely on the defence of qualified privilege because Dr Mahathir, in uttering and causing to be published and re-published, 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, The Sun, following a suit against the prime minister.

Anwar, who was sacked from the Cabinet on Sept 2, last year is serving a six-year jail term after he was convicted by the High Court on four counts of corrupt practice on April 14.

He also goes on trial from June 7 on a charge of sodomy.

-- BERNAMA

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