

03/07/1999

Registrar disqualifies herself from hearing suit

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - A Senior Assistant Registrar today disqualified herself from hearing an application by the Prime Minister to strike out a defamation suit filed against him by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Norliza Othman also disqualified herself from hearing another application by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to amend his statement of defence in chambers.

She did so because she had taken a confession by Anwar's former speech writer, Dr Munawar Ahmad Anees.

Norliza has sent the case back before judge Datuk Dr Kamalanathan Ratnam for mention on July 6.

Dr Munawar was jailed six months on Sept 19 last year for allowing Anwar to sodomise him.

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

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

Dr Mahathir, in his affidavit-in-support filed for the application to strike out the suit, 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.

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