

# ***Shahidan to file suit against opposition leader***

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KANGAR: Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said yesterday he would file a RM100mil defamation suit against an opposition leader for allegedly making malicious and unfounded claims during the Indera Kayangan by-election.

Shahidan, who was also seeking a public apology, said his reputation had been smeared through allegations that he was a wealthy menteri besar, who supposedly tendered out lucrative contracts to cronies or relatives.

"The allegations were made with the intent of shaming me in the eyes of the public here," Shahidan said after chairing the weekly state exco meeting.

He said his lawyer was in the process of filing the necessary documents and a court notice would be issued to the opposition leader soon.

"The quantum sought is

equivalent to the damage that I have suffered," he said.

Shahidan added that he was not bothered about personal attacks made during campaigning for the by-election but stressed he would not forgive any intentional move to smear his reputation as a menteri besar or claims that he practised cronyism.

"I'm not really involved in the process of awarding state projects. I attend the meetings as a menteri besar but it is the state officials who make the ultimate selection on who should be picked for the jobs," he said.

Shahidan added that the impending suit was also related to the opposition's claim during the by-election that they had government secrets in their possession.

"Allegations made pertaining to the so-called secret contents of the boxes were unsubstantiated," he said.

On Barisan Nasional's victory in the by-election, he said an initial analysis of the result did not indicate a Chinese swing towards the opposition; contrary to Parti Keadilan Nasional's claim that it had obtained 31% of the Chinese votes.

"What is certain is that more voters supported Barisan compared to the 1999 general election," said Shahidan, adding that an in-depth analysis would be conducted.

He also announced that the state would host a major thanksgiving.

"Invitations will be sent to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and all federal ministers," he said.

About 1,000 national, state and community leaders are expected to attend.