

Decision to strike out suit against Anifah 'absurd'
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The decision of the Kuala Lumpur High Court today to strike out a RM100 million defamation suit filed by Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim against Foreign Minister Anifah Aman is absurd, Anwar's lawyer Sankara Nair said.

Sankara (right) said the court's decision means a minister and the government cannot be sued for defamation.

The court gave no reason in accepting Anifah's striking-out application.

"The decision gives any minister a 'carte blanche' to defame anyone and be 'immune' to defamation suits. This is, yet again, another miscarriage of justice," Sankara said.

"Lately there is a disturbing trend in Anwar's defamation suits, especially when it involves ministers or very important persons. They get away at a very early stage of the suit. Hence, they need not have to sit in the witness box to be cross-examined during a full trial."

Sankara said another disturbing trend lately was that not only would the court decide to strike out interlocutory cases at an early stage, but also impose hefty costs on his client.

"The punitive costs on Anwar is to be paid to the other side. This is to serve as a deterrent on Anwar from filing similar suits in the future. How then will Anwar ever get justice?" he asked.

Today's decision was made by Justice Louis O'Hara, who also ordered Anwar to pay costs, which would be assessed by the deputy registrar of the High Court.

Anwar had filed the suit on May 27, 2009, where he named Anifah in his personal capacity, and the Kimanis Member of Parliament in his official capacity as the foreign minister. The opposition leader also named the Malaysian government as the third defendant.

The action followed Anifah's joint press conference with United States Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, where the minister claimed Anwar had offered him the post of deputy prime minister if he (Anwar) were to set up a government on Sept 16, 2008.

Anwar also claimed that Anifah had defamed him by saying that he was attempting to buy over MPs and was tarnishing his image.