

Dr M meetings were on politics, not court cases – Zahid

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Hidir Reduan Abdul Rashid

Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has denied former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's allegations that their five meetings between June 2018 and February 2020 were to discuss the Umno president's criminal court cases.

Zahid contended that the 2018 meetings involved the then prime minister allegedly pleading for the former to dissolve Umno and bring its members into Bersatu.

At the time Mahathir was the Bersatu chairperson but was expelled from the party in late 2020. He later founded Pejuang.

In a filing at the Kuala Lumpur High Court on May 31 this year, Zahid also claimed that two of the 2020 meetings were initiated by Mahathir.

He claimed they involved discussions triggered by the Sheraton Move which toppled the Pakatan Harapan administration in February of that year.

In April, Zahid filed a defamation suit against Mahathir over remarks the nonagenarian made at a press conference a month earlier.

The civil action is over Mahathir's claim that Zahid met him to try and get on his good side in relation to the criminal charges against the former deputy prime minister.

On May 17, in a statement of defence against the lawsuit, Mahathir claimed the five meetings took place on June 7, 2018, Sept 13, 2018, and once a day from Feb 23 to 25, 2020.

In a reply to the defence sighted by Malaysiakini, Zahid claimed the first meeting in June 2018 was merely part of Ramadan festivities, whereby he alleged to have posted about it on Twitter and Facebook.

“In this meeting also, the defendant (Mahathir) proposed and then urged the plaintiff (Zahid) to dissolve Umno and to plead with Umno members (especially Umno parliamentarians and senators) to join the defendant in Bersatu,” Zahid said.

He further alleged to have documentary evidence to reveal during the court hearing of the suit.

In denying he raised the issue of criminal cases against him during the meeting, Zahid pointed out that it would not be possible for that to happen as he had yet to be charged in court for any alleged offence nor was he even part of any investigation then.

Other leaders allegedly at meetings

Regarding the Sept 13, 2018 meeting, Zahid claimed it involved a discussion on the feasibility of cooperation between Umno and Bersatu.

The plaintiff alleged that in the meeting - which he claimed was also attended by Umno supreme council members Mohamad Hasan, Ismail Sabri Yaakob, and Mahdzir Khalid - Mahathir urged him to dissolve Umno and bring its members into Bersatu.

Regarding the Feb 23 meeting in 2020, he alleged Mahathir sought the meetup not only with him (Zahid) but also with six other political leaders.

The leaders who were alleged to have attended the meeting were Bersatu president Muhyiddin Yassin, PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang, Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) parliamentary whip Fadillah Yusof, GPS chairperson Abang Johari Openg, then PKR deputy president Azmin Ali, and Warisan president Shafie

Apdal.

Zahid claimed he and the other party leaders declared support for Mahathir to be the new premier and establish a new political coalition.

In relation to the Feb 24 meeting, the plaintiff claimed it was a brief meetup with Mahathir following the latter stepping down as premier.

Zahid claimed that the meetup - which he also said was attended by Azmin and Muhyiddin - merely involved him greeting Mahathir as the latter was on his way to the palace of the Agong.

Forming unity govt

Regarding the Feb 25 meeting, the plaintiff contended the defendant not only sought him but also other political leaders to discuss the formation of a unity government only involving lawmakers from political parties and not influential party leaders.

Zahid claimed the meeting with then-interim premier Mahathir was also attended by PKR president Anwar Ibrahim, then DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, Hadi, Abang Johari, Amanah president Mohamad Sabu, and Umno leader

Hishammuddin Hussein.

The plaintiff pointed out that the three meetings in February were not about the criminal court cases against him but as part of efforts to resolve the political impasse in the country then.

The plaintiff contended that the defendant's claims regarding the five meetings were bare allegations, untrue, and "self-serving".

When contacted by Malaysiakini today, Mahathir's counsel Mior Nor Haidir Suhaimi confirmed that a copy of Zahid's reply had been served to them.

The lawyer added that the matter is fixed for an inter-partes injunction hearing before the Kuala Lumpur High Court on July 5.

Under the law, an inter-partes application hearing is one that is conducted with the presence of lawyers from both sides in the legal dispute.

Zahid is seeking an interim injunction order to prevent Mahathir from repeating the alleged defamatory statements, pending disposal of the main legal action.

At present, the Bagan Datuk MP is defending himself against multiple criminal

charges in ongoing trials at the High Courts at Kuala Lumpur and Shah Alam.

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