

Mahathir: I'm Malay, but not ashamed of Indian ancestry

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Hidir Reduan Abdul Rashid

Dr Mahathir Mohamad contended he is not ashamed of his Indian ancestry while still maintaining that this does not negate he is Malay.

The former premier made the testimony in today's civil court hearing of his defamation suit against Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Mahathir is suing over the allegation of an Identity Card (IC) bearing the name "Mahathir anak lelaki Iskandar Kutty".

"I am not ashamed to say that I have Indian blood, but that does not mean that I am not a Malay," he told the Kuala Lumpur High Court.

The 99-year-old politician's civil action is over Zahid's speech at the Kelana Umno division meeting on July 30, 2017.

Mahathir claimed that during the speech, the Umno president allegedly dredged up a copy of an old IC showing "Mahathir anak lelaki Iskandar Kutty".

The former lawmaker claimed that the “Kutty” allegation made it sound like he was a non-Malay opportunist who pretended to be Malay for political gain.

‘It’s not my name’

While under cross-examination by Zahid's counsel Sharul Fazli Kamarulzaman, Mahathir reiterated that the allegation made it seem like he cheated others.

"The implication is that I did not use that name (Mahathir anak lelaki Iskandar Kutty) but Mahathir Mohamad (to show that) I was cheating.

"It is not a matter of whether it is a Malay or Muslim name or not. The name (Mahathir anak lelaki Iskandar Kutty) is not my real name and I did not lie. My name is Mahathir Mohamad," the elder statesman emphasised.

The nonagenarian explained that while his family roots can be traced to Kerala, India, he never discussed with his family whether it was his father or grandfather who originated from there.

"If I go to Pakistan, they say I am Pakistani. If I am in Bangladesh, they say I am Bangladeshi. When I am in Sri Lanka, they say I am Sri Lankan. But that is not true.

"I am not from any of these countries, my dad is also not from these countries. He was born as a Malay from Malaysia," Mahathir quipped about several articles and books that discussed his possible ancestry.

Losing GE15

The former Langkawi MP claimed that Zahid's 2017 statement was a major factor behind his failure to retain the parliamentary seat in the 15th general election in late 2022.

Hearing before judicial commissioner Gan Techiong resumes this afternoon.

When proceedings resumed after a lunch break, Mahathir demanded that Zahid produce the alleged physical copy of the IC that showed the name "Mahathir anak lelaki Iskandar Kutty".

"He (Zahid) is not insulting my grandfather or anyone else, he is insulting me. Show proof that I am not Mahathir Mohamad. Proof that can be shown by the IC," Mahathir said.

Civil court proceedings will resume on Oct 14.

No malice

In his statement of defence, Zahid denied that the remark had ever been malicious, slanderous or harmed Mahathir's public reputation.

The Bagan Datuk MP claimed that the name on the IC referred to an individual based on information in an old copy of an identity document.

The 71-year-old claimed he had no control over any video publication regarding his statement on the media platform.

Counsels Muhammad Rafique Rashid Ali and Mior Nor Haidir Suhaimi are acting for Mahathir.

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