

I sued Anwar as his slander carries more weight as PM: Mahathir

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Dr Mahathir Mohamad sued Anwar Ibrahim because the latter's allegedly defamatory statements held more weight after he became prime minister compared to when he was the opposition chief, the Shah Alam High Court heard today.

In his RM150 million defamation suit, the 100-year-old former prime minister said Anwar had always claimed the former had amassed personal wealth when in power, even before the latter ascended to premiership.

"Anwar has always made (the same) false accusations against me (and) when he (did so) before becoming prime minister, it was not as effective.

"But when he became the prime minister (and) said the same accusations, it became very effective and this effect, reflecting what Anwar said to me, could be seen on social media, meaning that these accusations against me are stronger now than when he was not the prime minister.

“Which is why, when he became prime minister and made such false allegations (against me), I was forced to take legal action to sue for defamation,” he said to his lawyer Rafique Rashid Ali during examination-in-chief.

No evidence of my ‘embezzlement’

Mahathir was testifying as the only plaintiff’s witness in the suit’s first day of hearing, presided by judicial commissioner Donald Joseph Franklin this morning.

The former Langkawi MP also told the court that Anwar, in his defence, failed to show how much money Mahathir allegedly “embezzled” from the government.

“As prime minister, I carried out my duties and made decisions, but there is no document stating that I have embezzled government funds.

“I have no other source of income other than my salary,” he said.

The proceedings were cut short after Mahathir told the court that he was feeling slightly unwell to proceed with cross-examination, as he is on medication and could not function well.

The court then adjourned today’s proceedings as Anwar’s counsel Ranjit Singh did not object to the request.

‘Suit will serve as a lesson’

Mahathir filed the suit against Anwar on May 3, 2023, over the latter’s claims that the former prime minister had amassed personal riches while in power.

Mahathir was referring to Anwar’s speech delivered at the PKR special national congress at Melawati Stadium in Shah Alam on March 18 the same year as the party’s president, which mentioned someone “who had been in power for 22 years and an additional 22 months”.

Without naming anyone, Anwar in his speech claimed the person had used his position to amass wealth for him and his family.

In the suit’s statement of claim, Mahathir claimed Anwar had made untrue and baseless statements with the intent to create a negative perception against him.

The plaintiff claimed that the allegation had “tainted the plaintiff’s image as a statesperson (negarawan) who was the former prime minister (twice), has a reputation as a politician and leader who is respected in Malaysia and worldwide”.

Mahathir claimed that the allegation had not only ruined his image and reputation but also brought shame upon himself and his family members.

Mahathir contended that the defamation suit should serve as a lesson to any leader to smear others maliciously.

“Furthermore, taking into account the defendant’s position as prime minister, who has the power and/or workforce (tenaga kerja) to conduct research and/or double-check facts before it is uttered, the plaintiff is entitled to seek high exemplary damages as a lesson to any minister and/or leader to not easily issue statements without checking first and for the purpose of mere ‘political points’,” the statement of claim said.

Mahathir seeks RM50 million in general damages and RM100 million in exemplary damages.

He also seeks a court order for Anwar to issue a written apology and for the immediate retraction of the allegations.

In addition, the plaintiff is also seeking five percent annual interest on the damages awarded, to be calculated from the date of filing the civil action until the full payment of compensation, costs, and any other relief as the court deems fit.

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