

Gay slur: Dr M and Anwar may meet in court
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Former Malaysian prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Friday attempted to strike out a court hearing with his former deputy, Anwar Ibrahim in a suit launched after Mahathir called him gay.

Anwar's lawyer, Sankara Nair told AFP both parties had "defended their cases" in front of a high court judge and were waiting for a decision on whether the showdown would go ahead.

Anwar filed a defamation suit a year ago against Mahathir after he said he could not allow his deputy and heir apparent to become prime minister because he was a homosexual.

Mahathir's lawyers in January applied to strike out the suit, filing a 48-page affidavit in which Mahathir accused Anwar of aspiring to become premier and using the suit to "rehabilitate himself for high office."

"They were arguing that a similar suit we filed in 1999 had been struck out by the high court but we are saying, since the matter was not heard we cannot be stopped from filing a fresh suit," Sankara said.

In his strike out application Mahathir had reiterated claims that his sacked ex-deputy was a homosexual, citing convictions of a former speechwriter and Anwar's adopted brother for having sexual relationships with Anwar.

Reckless accusation

"At this point, it is up to the judge to go through all the written submissions and what we have argued in court today before he announces his judgement," said Mahathir's lawyer VK Lingam.

Anwar had said that Mahathir made a "scurrilous and utterly reckless accusation" on his character and must have the "moral courage" to face him in court.

Mahathir meanwhile had described the libel suit as "frivolous."

The lawsuit was sparked by Mahathir's comments in September 2005 to the media that he had to sack Anwar as deputy premier to prevent mainly Muslim Malaysia from having a "gay" leader.

Anwar was removed as deputy premier in 1998 and spent six years in jail for corruption and sodomy offences. The sodomy charges were overturned in 2004.

The decision on the strike out application will be heard on July 4.

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