

# Dr M, Muhyiddin ordered to file defence

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The High Court yesterday ordered former prime ministers Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, as well as three others to file their defence over a suit filed against them for alleged abuse of public office and negligence in connection with the termination of the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail (HSR) project.

They were ordered to file their defence statements by Feb 28 at the latest.

Apart from the two former prime ministers, the other three defendants named in the suit filed by Mohd Hatta Sanuri, 47, are former minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy) Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed, former transport minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong and the government.

Lawyer Mohaji Selamat, representing Hatta, said the court also ordered his client to file the reply to the statements of defence by March 28.

The court set March 30 for further case management, Mohaji said when contacted after the case management, conducted

online, before Senior Assistant Registrar Nur Shasha Hidayah Nor Azahar yesterday.

Hatta filed the suit on Dec 30 last year, on behalf of himself and more than 32 million Malaysians, who were affected and disappointed by the waste incurred by all defendants for allegedly terminating the HSR project.

In the statement of claim, Hatta said Dr Mahathir, who was then the seventh prime minister, had committed the tort of misfeasance in public office when he decided to postpone the high-speed rail project, causing the government and Malaysian people to pay compensation of almost RM46 million to the Singapore government.

He claimed that Muhyiddin, who was then the eighth prime minister, also committed the tort of misfeasance in public office for terminating the project, causing the Malaysian government and the people to pay RM320,270,519.24 in compensation for the cancellation of the Bilateral Agreement between Malaysia and Singapore.

Hatta claimed that Mustapha,

who was responsible for managing the project, had committed a similar offence by shelving the project.

Meanwhile, Wee committed the tort of misfeasance in public office for denying Malaysians their right to enjoy a first-class transport system with the cancellation of the HSR project.

He is seeking a court order to declare the cancellation of the project null and void, as well as for all the defendants to pay RM1 million compensation to him and all Malaysians for wrongfully and negligently cancelling the HSR project.

On Jan 1, 2021, Malaysia and Singapore announced the termination of the 350-kilometre Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail project as the two countries failed to reach an agreement on changes proposed by Malaysia before the expiry of the project agreement on Dec 31, 2020.

Accordingly, Malaysia paid S\$102.8 million to Singapore for costs incurred for the development of the HSR project. **Berna-**

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