

'I am still alive,' Dr M tells court

Ex-prime minister left room in stitches with reply to Ahmad Zahid's lawyer

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KUALA LUMPUR: His age may be approaching the century mark, but Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (*pic*) still showed sharpness and stamina as he testified for hours at the High Court in a hearing for a defamation lawsuit.

The 99-year-old refused to take a break when his opponent's lawyer, Mohamed Shahrul Fazli Kamarulzaman, requested a short recess during the proceedings here yesterday.

"We can continue," said the former prime minister.

Dr Mahathir was testifying in a lawsuit he initiated against Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi for alleged defamation over the latter's "Kutty" remarks.

His candour also left the court-



room in stitches when he said he was "still alive" to a question by Mohamed Shahrul.

Mohamed Shahrul: You have 10 siblings ... who is still alive?

Dr Mahathir: Saya lah, saya masih hidup. (Me, I am still alive).

Dr Mahathir, however, changed to a serious tone when answering questions on the impugned statement by Ahmad Zahid.

He said he was not embarrassed about having Indian ances-

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Mahathir Mohamad

try, but his grievance came from the statement "Mahathir anak lelaki Iskandar Kutty."

"I'm not ashamed to say I have Indian heritage, but that does not mean I am not Malay," he said.

He added that his lineage was never something that was seriously discussed within his family.

"This lawsuit is not questioning whether Mahathir and Iskandar are Muslim names but rather addressing the accusation of deception relating to my real name," he added.

On July 20 last year, Dr Mahathir filed the lawsuit against Ahmad Zahid, 70, as the sole defendant, for allegedly issuing defamatory statements.

In his statement of claim, Dr Mahathir claimed that Ahmad Zahid had issued the defamatory statement against him during an Umno division meeting in Kelana Jaya on July 30, 2017.

The statement was reproduced online, which was said to be easily accessed by Internet users without any restriction.

Dr Mahathir claimed that the libellous statement meant that he was not born a Malay or a Muslim, with the alleged original name of

"Mahathir son of Iskandar Kutty" and that he claimed to be a Malay when he became prime minister to gain political and personal advantage, apart from belittling Malaysians of Indian Muslim descent.

In his statement of defence, Ahmad Zahid denied that the statement made on July 30, 2017, was malicious and slanderous and harmed the reputation of the plaintiff in the public eye.

The Umno president claimed that the name "Mahathir son of Iskandar Kutty" refers to an individual based on the information in an old copy of an identity card, in addition to claiming that he also has no control over any video publication regarding his statement on the media platform.

The hearing continues before Judicial Commissioner Gan Techiong on Oct 14.