

Dr M's defamation suit against Zahid postponed again

By ALLISON LAI
allison@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: The lawsuit by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad against Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has to be postponed again after the former premier was warded for a cough.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir, who recently celebrated his 99th birthday, was also advised not to travel overseas until the trial begins.

Judicial Commissioner Gan Techiong gave the advice when the lawsuit had to be postponed again after Dr Mahathir was admitted to the National Heart Institute (IJN) for a cough.

The former prime minister's lawyer, Mior Nor Haidir Suhaimi, informed the High Court that car-

diologists from IJN did not permit his client to leave the hospital after he was warded on July 15, a day after he returned from London.

Mior Nor Haidir then applied for the hearing on Friday to be vacated, as he presented the court with a letter from IJN.

It was supposed to be the first day of the trial after the initial proceedings on Feb 13 were postponed as Dr Mahathir was unwell and was given a medical certificate from IJN.

Gan confirmed the legitimacy of the IJN letter and expressed concern for the health problems faced by 99-year-old Dr Mahathir.

However, he also reiterated the need to proceed with the trial, as it has been pending since 2022.

"When it is close to the (trial)

"We cannot keep adjourning for any reason."

Gan Techiong

dates, maybe you can advise him (Dr Mahathir) not to go overseas so that he can have a good rest and can attend the proceedings.

"We postponed on Feb 13 and now we have to adjourn again today.

"We cannot keep adjourning for any reason," he said.

An advisory was given to Mior Nor Haidir, suggesting that his client refrain from travelling

abroad until the rescheduled hearing dates of Aug 26 and 27.

The defence lawyer, Mohamed Shahrul Fazli Kamarulzaman, expressed his sympathy for Dr Mahathir's condition and proposed the possibility of calling his son, Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir, to testify in the rescheduled trial if the former premier is unable to attend.

The case had been delayed twice before, once in November 2023 due to a change in the presiding judge and again in February this year when Dr Mahathir was unwell.

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

Dr Mahathir has filed a claim stating that Ahmad Zahid made a defamatory statement about him during an Umno divisional meeting in Kelana Jaya on July 30, 2017.

This statement was then shared on Astro Awani's YouTube channel and various online news portals, making it easily accessible to Internet users without any restrictions.

Dr Mahathir claimed that the slanderous statement meant that he was not born as a Malay or a Muslim.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Zahid, in his statement of defence filed on Aug 17 last year, denied that the statement made on July 30, 2017, was malicious and slanderous and harmed the reputation of the plaintiff in the public eye.