

# Muhyiddin ordered to pay RM1.35mil for defaming Lim

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Former prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has been ordered by the court to pay RM1.35mil in damages for defaming DAP chairman Lim Guan Eng over the former's statement on Al-Bukhary Foundation's tax exemption.

High Court Judicial Commissioner Roz Mawar Rozain made the ruling after finding that Lim had proven his case against the Bersatu president.

In her decision, JC Roz Mawar said Muhyiddin had resources at

his disposal to verify and confirm whether his understanding was correct on facts.

"Yet he did not do so and continued to make further defamatory statements against the plaintiff (Lim) after the latter had brought to his attention the falsity of such allegations in the defamatory statements," she said yesterday.

Lim had sued Muhyiddin over the latter's statement on the cancellation of Yayasan Albukhary's tax exemption.

JC Roz Mawar also said the court could not accept Muhyiddin's defence that the language used in the impugned statements was not inflammatory.

"The context of the defamatory statements, in their natural and ordinary meaning, incited racial sentiments," she said.

The court found Muhyiddin had deliberately infused his statements with religious and racial overtones by repeatedly highlighting Yayasan Al-Bukhary's role in Islamic charitable work.

"The court also found that qualified privilege did not apply, as these statements were not made within the appropriate context and were instead part of a public campaign.

"The timing of these statements, made immediately after his Malaysian Anti-Corruption Com-

mission (MACC) questioning, suggested an improper motive to divert attention from his own legal issues," JC Roz Mawar said.

The court ordered Muhyiddin to pay RM1.05mil in general damages; RM150,000 in aggravated damages; and RM150,000 in exemplary damages. He was also ordered to pay Lim RM50,000 in costs.

Muhyiddin said that he was appealing the judgment.

"I have instructed my lawyers to appeal against the decision as I believe that my statements were not defamatory and that I have a good defence to the claim and that the amount that was awarded by the court was excessive.

"In compliance with the decision of the court, I will be removing the posts that are the subject matter of this action from my social media accounts," he said.

On March 27, last year, Lim, who was finance minister from 2018 to 2020 during the Pakatan Harapan administration, filed the suit against Muhyiddin saying that the latter had defamed him in several Facebook posts after being released on bail by MACC on March 9, 2023.

In his statement of claim, Lim also said Muhyiddin had implied that he had cancelled the approved tax exemption status given to Yayasan Al-Bukhary.