

Nurul Izzah: Why is AG defending Umno leader in defamation case?

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The High Court wants mediation in case over statements by Ismail Sabri Yaakob on photo PKR vice-president took with daughter of Sulu 'king' in Philippines.

KUALA LUMPUR: Nurul Izzah Anwar's defamation suit against Ismail Sabri Yaakob was postponed after her lawyer questioned the rationale behind the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) appearing as the UMNO minister's defence lawyer.

"He (Ismail) made a statement which we view as slander, in an Umno-organised event, not an official event or one that is related to his official duty as a minister," Nurul Izzah's lawyer, R Sivarasa told reporters at the Kuala Lumpur Court Complex here today.

"The issue he spoke about had nothing to do with his ministerial duties. In that context, it is reasonable to question why the AG is representing him in this case."

Nurul Izzah is suing Rural and Regional Development Minister Ismail, along with Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar, for allegedly defaming her by claiming she had committed "treason".

This came after she was photographed with self-styled Sulu princess Jacel Kiram – daughter of Jamalulail Kiram, who is said to have led the intrusion in Lahad Datu, Sabah in 2013 – in Manila, Philippines, on Nov 9, 2015.

Both Ismail and Khalid had allegedly also accused her of being a "traitor".

Sivarasa said the court had instructed for both the plaintiff and the defendants to find a solution to their dispute through mediation before the trial commenced.

"This case hasn't gone through the mediation process. It is a normal practice in the High Court, where all cases need to undergo a mediation process before it goes for a full trial.

"It's an attempt to solve the case (amicably)," he said, adding that his party was ready for a trial.

But if both parties couldn't reach an agreement, the full trial will take place from Aug 9-11 this year.

Nurul Izzah, who is also vice-president of PKR, had previously apologised for taking the picture with Jacel.

She said it was taken at an event hosted by the Council on Philippine Affairs & the Asian Institute for Democracy, the office of the City Mayor of Manila and the office of the Philippine vice-president, where she had no control over the guest list.

She also explained that Jacel took the picture with her as a sign of support for the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's position, which was for (jailed former opposition leader) Anwar Ibrahim to be immediately released.

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