

**Man who sued govt over Pulau Batu Puteh now suing Dr Mahathir,
Muhyiddin for axing Johor-Singapore high-speed rail project**

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By Ben Tan

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 31 — Former prime ministers Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin have been sued in relation to the cancellation of the High Speed Rail (HSR) project between Malaysia and Singapore.

The plaintiff is Mohd Hatta Sanuri who sued the federal government in 2021 when it withdrew its review application of the International Court of Justice's decision on Pulau Batu Puteh, also known as Pedra Branca, that had been awarded to Singapore.

Mohd Hatta filed the writ of summons against the former prime ministers as well as two other former ministers for alleged negligence and misconduct at the High Court here on December 30 last year.

He demanded that the defendants reinstate the HSR project and also requested that they pay RM1 million as compensation to each Malaysian.

A copy of the writ of summons and related documents, sighted by Malay Mail, also listed former minister in the prime minister's department in charge of economy Datuk Seri Mustapha Mohamed, former transport minister Datuk Seri Wee Ka Siong and the Malaysian government as the third, fourth and fifth defendants.

According to the lawsuit, Mohd Hatta is represented by Kuala Selangor-based law firm Messrs Mohaji, Hazury and Ismail.

In his court filings, Mohd Hatta claimed that Dr Mahathir was negligent and committed malfeasance in public office when the then prime minister ordered the suspension of the HSR project on September 5, 2018, which resulted in the Malaysian government having to pay RM46 million in compensation to Singapore on January 31, 2019.

He claimed that Muhyiddin had also committed negligence and malfeasance in public office, as the then prime minister, by terminating the HSR project on December 31, 2020.

Mohd Hatta claimed that the decision caused the Malaysian government to pay more than RM320 million as compensation to Singapore in the following year for the cancellation of the bilateral agreement between both countries.

Besides the two former prime ministers, Mohd Hatta also claimed that Mustapha was similarly negligent and had committed malfeasance in public office in relation to the delay of the HSR project.

He also alleged that Wee had also acted negligent and had committed malfeasance in public office regarding the HSR project's management.

In his statement of claim, Mohd Hatta said the losses suffered by all Malaysians following the termination of the HSR project, included losing the confidence of foreign investors in the country; the loss of 70,000 potentially high-paying jobs from the project; a lost opportunity to acquire RM70 billion in profit from the construction and operation of the HSR project.

He also listed losses of more than RM366 million due to the Malaysia government having to compensate Singapore.

Mohd Hatta insisted that the defendants need to pay severe and exemplary damages to every Malaysian for their unconstitutional, unjust actions and for their own dishonest benefit contrary to public interest.

Mohd Hatta is seeking several reliefs, including a declaration compelling the defendants to pay RM1 million as damages and compensation to every Malaysian.

He also called on the court order to compel all five defendants to provide written explanation on the reasons for the delay, cancellation and termination of the project.

The memorandum of appearance was filed in court on January 20, where the Attorney General's Office appeared on behalf of the defendants in the lawsuit.

The High Court has scheduled February 2 as case management.

Checks by Malay Mail showed that Mohd Hatta is a member of the Kuala Selangor Municipal Council. The 46-year-old was recently reappointed for a second term.

Malaysia and Singapore have inked bilateral agreements for the HSR project on December 13, 2016.

The 350km railway line was to be completed in 2026, reducing the travel time between both destinations to 90 minutes.

The project was put on hold in September 2018 with both sides agreeing to shelf the bilateral project worth RM110 billion until December 31, 2020.

On January 1, 2021, Malaysia and Singapore jointly announced the termination of the HSR project as there was no agreement reached on the changes proposed by Malaysia and the fact that the agreement had expired on December 31, 2020.

On March 2021, Malaysia announced it had paid SG\$102.8 million (RM330 million) to Singapore for the cost incurred by the republic for the development of HSR and the delays involved.

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