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 COURT-MAHATHIR (CORRECTED RPTN, REPLACING FIRST PARA) R R R R R

KUALA LUMPUR, AUG 11⁸⁷ (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY FILED A LIBEL SUIT AGAINST THE EDITOR AND THE PROPRIETOR AND PUBLISHER OF THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW (FEER) OVER AN ARTICLE PERTAINING TO THE SALE OF LIMBANG IN SARAWAK TO BRUNEI DARUSSALAM.

THE SUIT WAS FILED AT THE HIGH COURT REGISTRY HERE BY ATTORNEY-GENERAL TAN SRI ABU TALIB OTHMAN.

TAN SRI ABU TALIB TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS SEEKING DAMAGES FOR THE ARTICLE'S DEFAMATORY STATEMENT.

HOWEVER, THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL DID NOT MENTION THE AMOUNT OF THE CLAIM.

IN ITS MAY 21 ISSUE, THE FEER REPORTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD DISCUSSED THE POSSIBLE SALE OF LIMBANG, IN NORTHEAST SARAWAK, TO BRUNEI DARUSSALAM AT A START PRICE OF US\$6 BILLION (M\$15 BILLION) DURING HIS VISIT TO THE SULTANATE IN MARCH. -- MORE (END OF CORRECTED RPTN)

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THE FEER SUBSEQUENTLY ISSUED A RETRACTION AND AN APOLOGY TO DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHICH WAS CARRIED BY THE PRESS.

HOWEVER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR HAD DESCRIBED THE APOLOGY AS INAPPROPRIATE.

IN HIS STATEMENT OF CLAIM, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAYS THE WORDS IN THE ARTICLE CONCERNING HIM IN THE WAY OF HIS OFFICE AS PRIME MINISTER, IN THEIR ORDINARY MEANING, ARE UNDERSTOOD TO MEAN THAT HE WAS ENGAGED IN AN UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND SURREPTITIOUS ATTEMPT TO SELL TO BRUNEI A PART OF THE TERRITORY OF SARAWAK WHICH IS A COMPONENT OF MALAYSIA.

HE SAYS THE ARTICLE MEANT THAT IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS END HE WAS PARTY TO A DECISION TO LIE ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT TO BRUNEI AND THAT HE WAS UNFIT TO ACT AS THE MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAYS THAT BECAUSE OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE SAID WORDS HE HAD BEEN DAMAGED IN HIS CHARACTER AS PRIME MINISTER AND HAD BEEN BROUGHT INTO PUBLIC SCANDAL, ODIUM AND CONTEMPT. -- MORE

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COURT-MAHATHIR 3 KUALA LUMPUR R R R

HE SAYS THAT THROUGH A LETTER DATED MAY 26, TAN SRI ABU TALIB, ON HIS BEHALF, HAD WRITTEN TO THE MAGAZINE'S EDITOR, ENCIK DEREK DAVIES, WITH A PROPOSAL TO PUBLISH A FULL AND COMPLETE APOLOGY.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE SAID LETTER, THE TWO DEFENDANTS FAILED AND REFUSED TO APOLOGISE BUT ON THE CONTRARY, UNDER THE HEADLINES +RETRACTION AND APOLOGY+, CAUSED TO BE PRINTED AND PUBLISHED WORDS WHICH AMONG OTHERS MEANT THAT HE WAS UNFIT TO ACT AS A PRIME MINISTER, HE ADDS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAYS THE WORDS MEAN THAT ALTHOUGH HE HAD DENIED THE TRUTH OF THE WORDS SET OUT IN THE ARTICLE RELATING TO LIMBANG, THE WORDS COMPLAINED OF ARE BASED ON SOURCES WHICH HAD BEEN PROVED TO BE BOTH WELL-INFORMED AND RELIABLE, THAT OTHER REPORTS FROM THE SAME SOURCES PROVED TO BE RELIABLE AND THAT THE ARTICLE ON LIMBANG IS TRUE.

HE SAYS WHAT THE ARTICLE UNDER +RETRACTION AND APOLOGY+ MEANS IS THAT HE HAD COMPLAINED ABOUT THE WORDS SET OUT IN THE ARTICLE ON LIMBANG AND THAT THE NATURE OF HIS COMPLAINT IS NOT THAT THE ARTICLE IS FALSE AND DEFAMATORY BUT THAT IT IS ACTUATED BY MALICE.

BECAUSE OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE SAID WORDS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAYS, HE HAD BEEN FURTHER DAMAGED IN HIS CHARACTER AS PRIME MINISTER AND HAD BEEN BROUGHT INTO PUBLIC SCANDAL, ODIUM AND CONTEMPT. -- MORE

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COURT-MAHATHIR 4 KUALA LUMPUR

HE SAYS THAT UNLESS FURTHER RESTRAINED, THE TWO DEFENDANTS INTEND TO PUBLISH SIMILAR WORDS AGAINST HIM.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ASKED FOR DAMAGES FOR LIBEL IN THE TWO ARTICLES AND AN INJUNCTION TO STOP THE TWO DEFENDANTS OR THEIR SERVANTS FROM PUBLISHING OR CAUSING TO BE PUBLISHED ANY SIMILAR WORDS DEFAMATORY TO HIM. -- BERNAMA

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