

D643

U E082 AAE
COURT-FEER (CORRECTED RPTN)

88
KUALA LUMPUR, MARCH 24 (BERNAMA) -- THE HIGH COURT HERE POSTPONED TO TOMORROW THE HEARING OF AN APPLICATION BY THE EDITOR AND THE OWNER AND PUBLISHER OF THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW (FEER) TO INCLUDE THE HOME MINISTER AND THE GOVERNMENT AS THIRD PARTIES IN A LIBEL SUIT AGAINST THEM.

JUSTICE DATUK AJAIB SINGH, WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO HEAR THE APPLICATION TODAY, POSTPONED THE HEARING AFTER ENCIK MUHAMMAD SHAFEE ABDULLAH, COUNSEL FOR FEER, INFORMED THAT HE HAD NOT YET GOT BACK ALL THE LOTS OF AUTHORITIES WHICH HE HAD SENT TO A PRINTING FIRM FOR BINDING.

THE JUDGE SAID HE WANTED TO HEAR THIS APPLICATION BEFORE HEARING AN APPLICATION BY PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD FOR FURTHER AND BETTER PARTICULARS RELATING TO HIS LIBEL SUIT AGAINST THE FEER.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR HAD LAST AUGUST FILED THE LIBEL SUIT OVER AN ARTICLE PERTAINING TO THE PURPORTED POSSIBLE SALE OF LIMBANG IN SARAWAK TO BRUNEI DARUSSALAM WHICH APPEARED IN THE FEER ON MAY 21 LAST YEAR.

IN THE APPLICATION FOR FURTHER AND BETTER PARTICULARS, THE PRIME MINISTER IS ASKING THE DEFENDANTS TO SPECIFY THE NAME OF THE SOURCE OR SOURCES WHICH THEY CLAIM HAD IN THE PAST PROVED TO BE WELL-INFORMED AND RELIABLE. -- MORE

(END OF CORRECTED RPTN)

1750MST 24 03 88

D641

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COURT-FEER 2 KUALA LUMPUR

THE HONG KONG-BASED WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE HAD REPORTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD DISCUSSED THE POSSIBLE SALE OF LIMBANG TO BRUNEI DARUSSALAM AT A START PRICE OF US\$6 BILLION (M\$15 BILLION) DURING HIS VISIT TO THE SULTANATE IN MARCH LAST YEAR.

IN THE SUIT, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, AMONG OTHER THINGS, CLAIMS THAT 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 PART OF THE TERRITORY OF SARAWAK WHICH IS A COMPONENT OF MALAYSIA.

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.

THE DEFENDANTS, IN THEIR DEFENCE, DENY THE ARTICLE WAS MEANT TO DEFAME THE PRIME MINISTER.

THEY CLAIM THAT IF THE WORDS WERE DEFAMATORY, THEY WERE PUBLISHED UPON AN OCCASION OF QUALIFIED PRIVILEGE, CONTENDING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO REPRESENTS THE CABINET AND THE GOVERNMENT, IS A PUBLIC FIGURE KNOWN THROUGHOUT MALAYSIA, NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES AND THE WORLD.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS REPRESENTED BY SENIOR FEDERAL COUNSEL T. SELVENTHIRANATHAN WHILE THE DEFENDANTS WERE REPRESENTED BY ENCIK MUHAMMAD SHAFEE ABDULLAH. -- BERNAMA

1745MST 24 03 88