

26 JUN 1996

Nasir-Ban

BAN ON M. NASIR TO BE LIFTED

KUALA LUMPUR, June 26 (Bernama) -- The ban on the airing of works by singer-composer M. Nasir by the electronic media will be lifted on July 1.

Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat decided to lift the ban, imposed 10 days ago after the artiste was alleged to have belittled Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, after considering all the factors revealed in the inquiry he ordered on his return from abroad early this week.

Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Zawawi Mahmuddin, in a statement today, said the minister made the decision in the interest of other artistes who are involved in the works of M. Nasir.

The action to "blacklist" M. Nasir was announced by Deputy Information Minister Datuk Sulaiman Mohamad on June 16 after the Utusan Malaysia newspaper reported that the singer belittled Dr Mahathir with his remark "Siapa Mahathir?" (Who is Mahathir?).

M. Nasir has denied the allegation in the report.

Zawawi met separately with M. Nasir on June 24 and the Utusan Malaysia journalist who wrote the report yesterday.

"Nasir denied he made the remark, whether in an interview with Utusan Malaysia during the rehearsal for Malam Puisi (which was sponsored by Kumpulan Utusan) or at any time before that, either publicly or confidentially," he said.

"On the other hand, the Utusan Malaysia journalist insisted M. Nasir did say 'Siapa Mahathir' in a telephone conversation between them on May 2, 1996. The Utusan journalist was willing to swear by it."

He said M. Nasir admitted being contacted on the telephone by the journalist concerned.

Since there was no third party who heard the details of the telephone conversation, Zawawi said, it was most difficult for the ministry to determine who was telling the truth.

"After considering all the explanations, the ministry has concluded that the issue is a problem between M. Nasir and Utusan. It is up to Nasir and Utusan to seek out the truth and settle their problem," he said.

He said the ministry wished to remind all those involved in broadcasting not to exceed the bounds of good behaviour.

Zawawi said the ministry would not hesitate to take appropriate action according to its adopted code of ethics.

"An artiste who has succeeded should not assume he could act arrogantly and selfishly without any thought for others or society in general.

"Artistes should be accountable and have social responsibility," he said. -- BERNAMA

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