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Ex-coach suspended over molest probe, court told

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Former national athletics coach C. Ramanathan was suspended following a police investigation into alleged sexual harassment of female athletes by him, Malaysian Amateur Athletics Union president Datuk Khalid Yunus told the High Court today.

Khalid said Ramanathan was still under suspension pending the disposal of his appeal against a conviction on charges of outraging the modesty of two female athletes.

"Pursuant to the police investigations, the plaintiff was charged and subsequently convicted in respect of the sexual harassment charges.

"I understand that the plaintiff has appealed against the conviction and as such, the MAAU considers this matter as yet to be resolved. The MAAU will reconsider upon the final resolution of the matter," he said.

Khalid was giving evidence at the hearing of a suit brought against him, as a MAAU office-bearer, by Ramanathan in respect of his suspension as coach.

Ramanathan, who claims no reason was given for his suspension, also claimed that the suspension amounted to a suspension of the contract between him and the MAAU.

He further claimed he had not been served with notice prior to the suspension nor was he given a chance to be heard.

Describing his suspension as "fatally flawed", Ramanathan said the MAAU was guilty of arbitrary action and abuse of power. He also charged MAAU with not acting on any valid or legal power or authority.

Ramanathan is seeking:

- * a declaration that MAAU's letter of suspension dated April 18, 1994, is bad in law, null and void and of no effect or consequence;
- * a declaration that his purported suspension without pay from April 18, 1994 is null and void;
- * a stay of the suspension and payment of his full salary and other benefits on the terms and conditions before the suspension pending the disposal of the suit; and
- * that he be paid arrears of salary, damages, interest, costs and other relief.

Ramanathan is represented by Karpal Singh while Mahathir Abdullah and S. Soba appeared for Khalid before Judicial Commissioner Datuk Kamalanathan Ratnam.

Asked by Mahathir about the circumstances leading Ramanathan to work with the MAAU, Khalid said the plaintiff was seconded from the National Sports Council until December 1991.

"The NSC did not renew his services from January 1992 onwards. We were prepared to pay him an allowance of RM700 a month for co-ordinating the coaching committee in the MAAU to prepare the development of coaching plans until the NSC reviewed his services," he said.

Khalid said Ramanathan was not employed by the MAAU but was paid an allowance for his services and the money was also to assist him financially while his future with the NSC was being decided.

To another question, Khalid said the allowance was stopped in March 1994 following the MAAU decision to suspend Ramanathan.

Hearing continues.

(END)