

18 MAR 1999
Mirzan-Suit
MIRZAN FILES RM200 MIL SUIT OVER AWSJ'S ARTICLE

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 (Bernama) -- Mirzan Mahathir, the eldest son of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, today filed a defamation suit against Dow Jones Publishing Company (Asia) Inc and four others, seeking damages amounting to RM200 million.

The writ of summons was filed by Messrs V.K. Lingam and Company at the Civil High Court Registry here.

Mirzan, who is the group executive chairman of Konsortium Perkapalan Berhad, named Dow Jones, Reginald Chua, William Adamopulos, G. Bruce Knecht and Dow Jones & Company Inc as defendants.

Chua is the editor of the Asian Wall Street Journal, Adamopulos is the publisher of AWSJ and Knecht is a journalist with AWSJ.

Mirzan is suing them over the publication of an article entitled "Mahathir's Eldest Son Limits Ambition" in the AWSJ in the Jan 4, 1999 issue. The article also appeared in the Internet under the title "Premier's Son Reins In Business Ambitions in Malaysia".

In his statement of claim, Mirzan said the allegations complained of were self-evidently of the more serious and damaging nature and they struck at the very core of his character, integrity and reputation as he is a leading and prominent businessman.

He said the defendants had afforded the plaintiff no opportunity to comment on or to answer those allegations prior to their publication of the article in the AWSJ and Dow Jones' website on the Internet.

He said instead, what all the defendants did was, on Nov 25 1998, the journalist (Knecht), acting on behalf of the other defendants, wrote to him that he would be in Malaysia the following week to do a story on several large companies including Konsortium Perkapalan and would like to interview Mirzan on Konsortium Perkapalan.

Mirzan said in his letter dated Nov 25, Knecht did not even refer at all to any of the allegations published by the defendants which he is complaining in the suit.

He said Knecht also gave no indication whatsoever to him during the interview conducted on Dec 2, 1998 that he was intending to write a story about Mirzan personally and about his relationship with his father and about the alleged nepotism, favouritism and privilege and his alleged incompetency or negligence in the conduct of his business affairs.

Mirzan said each of the defendants had no intention whatsoever of ascertaining the truth of the allegations and to publish whatever response given by him.

He said the defendants had only interviewed him or cause him to be interviewed so that they could subsequently made the spurious claims, if sued, that they had given him an opportunity to respond, and therefore the allegations pulished by them were true.

He said the defendants chose to publish the allegations complained of in the AWSJ and their website on the Internet for the entirely improper motive of enhancing their individual and collective reputations for publishing hard-hitting and controversial stories so that they would attract more readers or potential readers to the newspaper and more subscribers to the website.

Mirzan said he would also rely upon the failure of the defendants to apologise to him and their refusal to withdraw the article complained of from the website on the Internet.

Apart from the RM200 million damages, Mirzan also sought an injunction restraining the defendants and each of them, whether by themselves, their directors, their servants or agents or otherwise howsoever from further publishing or causing to be published or distributing the said or similar words or matter defamatory of him.

He also claimed interest, cost and other reliefs which the court deemed fit and proper to grant.

-- BERNAMA

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