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Reuters-apology

REUTERS APOLOGISES TO TUN DAIM

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 18 (Bernama) -- International news agency Reuters has apologised to Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin for publishing an article which the minister complains implied that he had accumulated wealth by abusing his political office.

In an advisory to subscribers today, Reuters said Daim had contacted the news agency concerning an article it published on Jan 8 entitled "Malaysia's Daim lends PM a helping hand again".

In Daim's view the article implied that he had accumulated his personal wealth by abusing his political office, Reuters said.

"We would like to make it clear that it was not our intention to make that suggestion," said the Reuters advisory.

"We fully accept that Tun Daim was a wealthy and successful businessman before he assumed political office, a fact which the story also made clear.

"We apologise to Tun Daim for any embarrassment caused by the article."

The Reuters apology comes in the wake of a spate of court actions taken by prominent Malaysians against printers and publishers recently for alleged defamation.

Mirzan Mahathir, chairman of Konsortium Perkapalan and son of Prime Minister Datuk Dr Mahathir Mohamad, recently sued the Malaysian printer of the Asian Wall Street Journal (AWSJ) for RM150 million for alleged libel.

The action against Star Papyrus Printing Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Star Publications (publisher of mass-circulation The Star newspaper), was in connection with an article that appeared in the AWSJ on Jan 4 1999.

Businessman Tan Sri Vincent Tan Chee Yioun has also sued Star Papyrus for RM200 million over an article in the AWSJ on Dec 21 1998.

Dr Mahathir himself has also been sued for RM100 million by former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for alleged defamation.

Anwar, now on trial for alleged corruption, claimed that Dr Mahathir had uttered defamatory words against him to local and foreign journalists at the Prime Minister's office on Sept 22 last year.

Meanwhile, DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang in a statement today said he had instructed his lawyers to file a "multi-million ringgit" defamation suit next Tuesday against Utusan Malaysia.

Lim claimed that a news report published by Utusan Malaysia on Saturday (Feb 13) had defamed him.

Lim also commented on Mingguan Malaysia's editorial commentary on "kegilaan menyaman" (suing craze), saying that it was not started by the opposition but was becoming a culture of the ruling party.

He alluded to the Umno Supreme Council's decision to have a panel of lawyers to take action against those making slanderous and wild allegations to discredit the party and government leaders.

-- BERNAMA

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