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Court-Sun

RM100 MILLION SUIT: SUN MEDIA FILES STATEMENT OF DEFENCE

KUALA LUMPUR, March 11 (Bernama) -- The Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd filed its statement of defence at the High Court here today to a RM100 million libel suit brought against it by former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

It was filed by Messrs V. Siva and Partners at the High Court Registry at Wisma Denmark.

In its statement of defence, the company claimed that the words in an article allegedly containing libel published by its newspaper, "The Sun", on Sept 23 last year were published upon an occasion of qualified privilege.

It said it was its legal, moral and social duty to publish the said words to readers of its newspaper who had a legitimate interest to receive the information.

Its conduct in publishing the words was therefore reasonable, its said.

Sun Media also claimed that the publication was a public interest issue and it should, therefore, be protected.

The statement of defence also included the full text of what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said at a news conference he held on Sept 22 last year and also questions he was asked by journalists.

The company claimed that it was the prime minister's public duty to explain to the general public the dismissal of Anwar from his posts and it was the duty of the media to convey that explanation to the general public as the general public had a corresponding interest to hear the explanation.

Anwar filed the suit on Jan 26, alleging that the company had published the article containing libel under the heading "Anwar's behaviour despicable: PM".

He is also seeking an injunction to restrain The Sun Media Corporation, formerly known as Sun Media Group Sdn Bhd, by its directors, servants and/or agents, from further publishing the said or any similar libel upon him.

He is also seeking interest, costs and any further or other relief deemed fit and proper by the court.

Anwar, 51, who was sacked from his posts as deputy prime minister and finance minister on Sept 2 last year, is facing five charges of sodomy and five of corrupt practice.

-- BERNAMA

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