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Court-Harakah

HARAKAH DENIES PUBLISHING ARTICLE ON ALLEGATIONS PM AN APOSTATE

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 17 (Bernama) -- Harakah never published an article alleging that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is an apostate, the hearing of a defamation suit by its permit holder against Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Bhd (STMB) and two others in the High Court here was told today.

Former PAS secretary-general Halim Arshat, 58, denied that as a permit holder of the tabloid, he had permitted Harakah, PAS' official organ, to publish such an article.

Halim, who suffered a stroke in February 1998, appeared to be in difficulty when speaking in answering questions by his counsel, Mohamed Hanipa Maidin.

Halim said that a news report over TV3's "Buletin Utama" at 8pm on Aug 18, 1997 that Harakah had published such an article had defamed him as the permit holder.

On March 3, this year, Halim filed the suit against STMB, TV3's operations director Yunus Said and producer of TV3's "Buletin Utama", Rozaireen Ibrahim, seeking damages of RM20 million from each of them.

Halimis also seeking a court order directing them to make an apology over "Buletin Utama" for three consecutive days.

Answering counsel L.H.Looi, representing the three defendants, Halim agreed that the sub-editor was the person responsible in the publication of articles in the Harakah.

Datuk Hishamuddin Yahya, 61, Harakah's managing director, told the court that even though Halim's name was not mentioned in the news report aired over "Buletin Utama", as a permit holder he was responsible over the articles published in the tabloid.

Hishamuddin said that the news report aired over TV3 was not true whatsoever and it was a vicious defamation against Halim.

"Normally, news aired by TV3 regarding PAS are biased and in many circumstances they are confusing especially for those yet to be aware of PAS' struggles," he said.

Responding to Looi, Hishamuddin said that he held a meeting with PAS to discuss action that should be taken over the alleged false news reports by TV3.

The outcome, he said, was the suit against TV3.

"I agree that TV3 is responsible in airing news reports which are true but I do not agree when TV3 airs news reports which are false," said Hishamuddin.

Suggested by Looi that TV3's error was acceptable, Hishamuddin said that TV3's error was a great destruction against PAS and Muslims.

"And TV3, I cannot forgive," said Hishamuddin, a member of the Harakah's board of directors.

Asked by Looi why PAS did not seek a clarification from TV3 on the matter, Hishamuddin said that "PAS already knew whatever requests made like clarifications from TV3 and even any other media, it will not be entertained."

Hishamuddin disagreed with Looi's suggestion that the news report over "Buletin Utama" did not bear any elements of defamation as what was reported was already common knowledge.

Hearing continues tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

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