

14/07/2000

Sun Media allowed to amend defence statement

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The High Court today allowed Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd to include the defence of justification in Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's RM100 million libel suit against it.

Judge Datuk R.K. Nathan allowed Sun Media to amend its statement of defence after counsel M. Manoharan, for Anwar, offered no objection to the application.

The application was supported by an affidavit by Sun Media director Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Din dated June 14.

Anwar sued Sun Media on Jan 26 last year over its report on Sept 23 last year entitled "Anwar's behaviour despicable: PM".

In their amended defence, Sun Media said it would be relying on the convictions of Anwar's one-time speech writer Dr Munawar Ahmad Anees and Anwar's adopted brother Sukma Darmawan Saasmitaat Madja, both of whom had pleaded guilty in the Sessions Court to committing an act of gross indecency.

(Munawar and Sukma had admitted on Sept 19, 1998, to committing the offence by allowing Anwar to sodomise them.)

Sun Media said it will be relying on a written confession signed by Sukma which was tendered in the Sessions Court.

Munawar and Sukma were sentenced to six months' jail each.

In the alternative, Sun Media is claiming that the words were published on an occasion of qualified privilege and was a fair comment upon a matter of public interest.

It said that its conduct in publishing the words was reasonable.

Sun Media said that Nathan, had on Aug 30 last year, struck out Anwar's suit against Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad over words spoken during a Press conference on Sept 22, 1998, and had held that the words were published on an occasion of qualified privilege and were true in fact and substance.

Sun Media said similarly, Anwar's suit against it should be struck out as the words in the report were the words spoken by the PM at that Press conference.

Datuk V.K. Lingam represented Sun Media. Nathan later fixed the case for mention on Aug 17.

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