

Accused denies circulating letter

KUALA LUMPUR: A business-woman, who is facing a RM50mil libel suit filed by a senator early last month, denied she had circulated a letter containing allegations against the politician to several ministers two years ago.

While admitting that she had written the said letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Nor Azizah Borhan said she did not copy it to five others including Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the Entrepreneur Development Minister.

In her defence dated April 30, Nor Azizah pleaded justification and fair comment saying that the letter was published on the basis of public interest as it concerned Senator Datuk Nor Azah Awin's conduct, character and integrity as a politician and entrepreneur.

She further denied that the words had defamed the senator.

Nor Azah had sued the former Usahanita president over the circulation of the letter complaining of her alleged cheating and fraud in regards to a company's ownership.

In her statement of claim dated April 2, Nor Azah claimed that the words used, in their natural and ordinary meaning, meant and were understood to mean that she was among others, a hypocrite, a dishonest person and of no integrity, an irresponsible business-woman and corporate figure without good working ethics, and unfit to be a leader.

She claimed that as a result, she had been seriously injured in her character, credit and reputation and in the way of her business and/or occupation.

She further claimed that apart from being brought into public scandal, odium, contempt and hurt, she had also been lowered in the estimation of right thinking of the society.

Apart from the RM50mil damages, Nor Azah is also seeking aggravated and exemplary damages, an injunction restraining the defendant from further publishing the defamatory words, interest and costs.

Yesterday, the suit was brought before High Court judge Justice Abdul Hamid Said in his chambers for a pre-trial discussion.

The judge then fixed June 13 to hear Nor Azah's application for the injunction.

Counsel Gopi Seshadari appeared for the senator while Ramesh N.P. Chandran represented the defendant.

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