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Rais-Newsweek

MALAYSIA MAY SUE NEWSWEEK OVER "LAUNCH PAD" CLAIM, SAYS RAIS

SHAH ALAM, Jan 31 (Bernama) -- The government is studying the possibility of initiating a civil suit against Newsweek magazine for claiming that Malaysia was a launch pad for the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

"I've have already collected the various articles churned out by this magazine and have requested the Attorney-General's Chambers to study them and come up with a report," said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim.

The report was expected to be ready in a week or two, he told reporters after opening a "Thinkers Forum' at Universiti Teknologi Mara here.

Dr Rais said action could also be taken against the magazine under Malaysia's Printing Presses and Publications Act.

"I am confident that we can, using international, regional or national laws, see to it that stern action is taken (against the magazine) through the courts," he said.

Dr Rais said the Cabinet had asked the Home Ministry's Publications Division to scrutinise the contents of other international magazines that allegedly claimed that Malaysia was a source of terrorism.

"We have been accused of being the launch pad for terrorism. This is an extreme view, and the government is concerned over the stand of these magazines," he said.

Dr Rais said the article on Malaysia in the Feb 4 issue of Newsweek could have a political motive in view of the fact that the Malaysian economy remained sound unlike that of several other countries.

Quoting a secret FBI report, the article said Malaysia was a primary operational launch pad for the Sept 11 attacks.

It said US intelligence believed that former Malaysian army captain Yazid Sufaat was a member of Jemaah Islamiah, "an Islamic extremist group that befriended (Osma) bin Laden and helped him develop a support network in Malaysia and throughout Southeast Asia".

Yazid is currently detained under the Internal Security Act for his alleged involvement in the activities of the militant KMM group.

The Newsweek article also quoted an unnamed intelligence source in the region as asying that Kuala Lumpur was the perfect place for Arabs to lie low.

Noting that the city attracted many Arab tourists, the magazine alleged that Malaysian laws allowed Muslims to enter the country without visas.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday dismissed the claim that Malaysia was the launch pad for the Sept 11 attacks, saying that the United States itself was used as the base for the attacks.

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