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SBS-Deny

SBS DENIES ANY ANTI-ANWAR PLOT

MELBOURNE, Nov 1 (Bernama) -- Special Broadcasting Service's (SBS) "Dateline" programme has rejected the "published allegations" of a conspiracy to undermine the reputation of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

In a media statement, SBS said it had been alleged that the "Dateline" reporter Ms Ginny Stein and the programme researcher had met "members of the pro-government press" and representatives of (former prime minister Tun) Dr Mahathir Mohamad's "government or cabinet to plot" against the former deputy prime minister.

"This is completely untrue and fanciful in the extreme," Dateline executive producer Mike Carey said.

"Neither Ms Stein nor the researcher had met nor had any contact whatsoever with the people with whom they are accused of plotting, in the course of preparing and presenting the story," he said.

"The story was inspired solely from the work done by Ms Stein and the researcher, based on material that is in the public domain."

Carey said suggestions that SBS Dateline had been paid "to produce this report by forces linked to the incoming prime minister (Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi) are grotesque lies."

"SBS Dateline stands by the story." Carey said.

The statement said that SBS was one of two Australian government-funded television networks in Australia. (The other is the Australian Broadcasting Commission).

"Dateline is Australia's premier television programme solely devoted to international current affairs.

"In recent years it has been the recipient of many Walkley awards, Australia's most prestigious awards for journalistic excellence," the statement said.

The Oct 22 Dateline programme showed images of International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) documents supplied to the US Treasury Internal Revenue Service (IRS), revealing that the Washington-based IIIT, of which Anwar was a director, had given his daughter, Nurul Izzah, US\$18,000 in 2000 and US\$54,000 in 2001.

Being a tax-exempt body regulated by the IRS, the IIIT is restricted by the IRS to give out money only for the purpose of promoting "research with emphasis on the development of Islamic scholarship in contemporary social studies" .

Nurul Izzah is now a final-year electronics engineering student in Malaysia.

-- BERNAMA

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