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Association files suit against DBP over definition of word

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Offended at being termed keling, an Indian Muslim Association today filed a summons against Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) over the definition of the word in its Kamus Dewan dictionary.

The summons, by the Angkatan Pelopor India Muslim Selangor Dan Wilayah Persekutuan (Apim), was filed through Zulkifli Yong Azmi and Co at the registry of the Appellate and Special Powers Division of the High Court.

In its originating summons, Apim, which was formed in July 2001 and with membership of about 2,000, is seeking a declaration that DBP had failed in its statutory role and responsibility by allowing the word and its various meanings to be published in its dictionary.

They are:

- \* keling - a word used to define an Indian who originates from South India;
- \* keling karam - used in a metaphor to describe someone who likes to make noise while talking or working;
- \* keling mabuk todi - used metaphorically to describe someone who utters nonsense; and,
- \* keling pelikat - used for Indians who are Muslims.

The association is also seeking compensation from DBP as the word, in general, embarrasses, degrades and humiliates the Indian community and when used in a metaphor, insults the Indians in Malaysia.

In an affidavit supporting the originating summons, Apim chairman Ramli Abdullah said that on Nov 20 last year, the association issued a memorandum on the word and a copy of it was sent to DPB director-general seeking DBP, with the co-operation of the Education Ministry and the Home Ministry, to:

- \* ban and drop the use of the word;
- \* ban the sale and distribution of DBP's Third Edition Kamus Dewan;
- \* stop publication of all reading materials which implicate the Indians in Malaysia;
- \* drop the use of the word for names of villages, tourist spots, roads and others; and,
- \* give reasons why the word cannot be abolished.

Ramli said DBP, through its letter dated Nov 23 last year, acknowledged receiving the memorandum.

He said a copy of the memorandum was also sent to Home Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the Education Minister's private secretary.

He claimed that the association also wrote a letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and several political and non-governmental organisations on the issue which, he said, was similar to the definition for "Malays" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica some time ago.