

**'Guan Eng didn't mount racist attacks against Utusan'**  
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**By Susan Loone**

An Utusan Malaysia news editor has conceded in the Penang High Court that DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng had not made specific remarks that led to an allegedly defamatory article being published in the daily.

Under cross-examination by Jagdeep Singh Deo (left), Zulkiflee Bakar told the court yesterday that he had been assigned to write the article, headlined Kebiadaban (arrogance of) Guan Eng, published on Dec 20 last year.

Zulkiflee, who has worked 18 years with Utusan, said he had discussed the assignment with his chief editor who shared his ideas, but that the article was his own writing.

Lim has sued the Umno-owned daily for defamation, following the article based on his speech themed 'A People's Government for the Real Malaysians', delivered at the Pakatan Rakyat convention in Kepala Batas on Dec 19 last year.

He is seeking general damages, aggravated and exemplary damages, costs and other relief deemed fit by the court. Lim was not at the hearing as he is in Japan on a two-day working trip.

Zulkiflee, when asked if he had experienced the bloody race riots of May 13, 1969, said he had not as he was about a year old then. However, he had learnt about what happened.

"You said your article was written to reply to racist attacks against Utusan... at (the) convention... did Lim (raise) the topics mentioned in your article (in which you said) Utusan wanted to reply to the attacks?" asked Jagdeep.

NONEZulkiflee eventually conceded that the speech did not mention the issues raised in his article, explaining that it was more of a wrap-up (rumusan) of the speech.

Asked if the speech contained false claims, Zulkifli answered in the negative.

He agreed that the daily has not taken any legal action to date against Lim (right) for the alleged contents of the speech.

"But do you agree that you said that all Utusan did was to struggle for 3Rs - race (Malay), religion (Islam) and Raja (king) - (but in reality it is) only meant for one ethnic group?" asked Jagdeep.

"We are defending the (federal) constitution," replied Zulkiflee.

He was also asked if Malays would be upset if he had written a false report involving demolition of Malay hawker stalls and eviction of the community.

Zulkiflee tried to explain himself but was told by Justice GV Varughese to state "yes or no".

"I agree that, if my report was false, it would upset the Malays," he replied.

Zulkiflee also agreed that Lim would look like a racist if the report was false and that this would cause the Malay community to be upset.

'Impact' on daily

Under re-examination by his lawyer Mohana Kumar, Zulkiflee said the article was written so that the newspaper's supporters and readers would know that Lim's "wild accusations" were baseless.

azlanHe added that Lim's accusations could affect the newspaper's circulation and financial position as a publisher.

State environment, health, welfare and caring society committee chairperson Phee Boon Poh and state finance department administration assistant officer Jamaliah Harun have also testified at the hearing.

Both denied that funds for the RM100 awarded under the senior citizens' programme had come from the Turf Club.

The hearing continues on Oct 17, with the defence to produce two more witnesses.

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