

Ex-editor claims removal was due to minister's pressure

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A former editor from Chinese news magazine Special Weekly has claimed that he was removed from the magazine last year after pressure from Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, Seow Kuwing Leong said he was transferred out from the magazine after Hishammuddin (left) visited Sin Chew Daily's office in Petaling Jaya last year and demanded his removal.

"Hishammuddin visited Sin Chew Daily on Aug 16 last year... and my removal was raised at the meeting (with the editors)," said the senior editor.

Both Sin Chew Daily and Special Weekly are owned by Chinese Media International Limited, a media conglomerate controlled by Sarawak timber tycoon Tiong Hiew King.

However, according to Seow, the directive from the minister was not in writing, but given verbally.

He said he was informed by his superior, Law Beng Chee, about the decision a few days after the home minister's visit, and was subsequently transferred to the advertorial desk.

"He said I was blacklisted and I had to stop my work."

While Law did not elaborate on the reason behind the removal, Seow said he was told by others that this was related to Special Weekly's difficulties in renewing its publishing permit.

"Since Special Weekly was facing problems in renewing the permit, the management raised the issue at the meeting with Hishammuddin. He said you should know how to deal with it."

However, Seow said he was not certain how true this was, but that was the reason given to him.

'Unfairly sacked by company'

Seow also complained that he was unfairly sacked by Chinese Media International Limited this week after being 'frozen' for one year on the advertorial desk.

He claimed he had been marginalised and ignored by the management in the past one year, without any meaningful work being assigned to him.

"I felt like even if I didn't come to work for a month, it would not be a big matter."

Seow was informed about the dismissal on Monday, when he returned to the office after a two-week holiday.

According to the dismissal letter handed over by a human resources executive, he was fired after an internal hearing on Oct 8 found him guilty relating to a disciplinary case.

However, Seow said his employer was merely seeking an excuse to sack him.

"I felt like I was 'killed' twice (by the company). The first was when they transferred me to another department, and the second time was this."

He said he would bring up the issue with the Human Resources Ministry for redress.

Meanwhile, Life magazine group under Chinese Media International Limited issued a statement late yesterday evening to rebut Seow.

The group stressed that Seow had repeatedly breached disciplinary rules and the dismissal was in accordance with the labour laws.

“As a staff member at management level, Seow had repeatedly violated disciplinary rules, including shouting at his colleagues.”

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