

**No settlement for Mkini vs Taib, trial to proceed
Malaysiakini.com
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A defamation suit brought against news portal Malaysiakini by Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud will proceed to trial after the two parties failed to reach a settlement.

Judicial commissioner Rosilah Yop fixed Jan 9-12 next year for the case to be heard during a case management today at the Kuala Lumpur High Court.

She also fixed Dec 13 for further case management of the trial.

Malaysiakini was represented by lawyer Fahri Azzat, while Taib was represented by lawyer Yee Mei Ken.

Met outside court, Fahri said Taib (the plaintiff) has indicated that he wants Malaysiakini (the defendant) to begin the trial.

"Normally the plaintiff will prove their case first... so the significance of this is that Taib does not need to come to court first and need not to be in the witness box yet."

Fahri added that he would consult Malaysiakini as to whether it is agreeable to the arrangement.

Today's proceedings were to decide whether the case will go to trial after the Kuala Lumpur High Court had on July 1 granted both parties until Sept 9 to work out a settlement.

Four-year-old suit

The suit, filed in 2007, is over a series of articles following reports that the Japanese tax authorities have discovered the payments made by a Japanese shipping cartel transporting logs from Sarawak were "illegitimate expenses".

The cartel members had allegedly paid Regent Star, a Hong Kong-based company - reportedly linked to Taib and his family - RM32 million in kickbacks.

Malaysiakini followed up the scandal with its own special report on the matter, 'RM32 mil kickbacks - tip of the iceberg'.

The four-year-old suit was put on hold after Taib sought to strike out certain parts of Malaysiakini's defence.

The appeal reached the Federal Court where the bid was unanimously rejected by a bench of three judges who also awarded cost of RM10,000 to the news portal and the co-defendant, editor-in-chief Steven Gan.