

**Legal lion offers to defend website
Malaysiakini.com
April 20, 2007**

Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud's legal ultimatum to malaysiakini has drawn a roar of protest from DAP.

The opposition party also revealed that its lawyers, including 'legal lion' and national chairperson Karpal Singh, have offered their services.

In a statement today, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng explained that the party was committed to defending press freedom.

"I spoke to DAP lawyers, including national chair and renowned legal lion Karpal, who have agreed with the commitment to offer our legal services to malaysiakini to fight this lawsuit.

"Public interest requires that this mother of all court battles must be won to preserve what is left of freedom of information for Malaysia in cyberspace," he said.

Is he suing Japan Times?

In a legal letter delivered yesterday, Taib demanded the removal of several articles from malaysiakini which contained allegations of corruption against him.

He identified eight articles, which he deemed as being defamatory, and told malaysiakini to remove them within 48 hours and apologise or face legal action.

The articles - published between April 6 and 14 - alleged that Taib has been implicated in a scandal involving RM32 million in kickbacks paid by Japanese shipping companies for timber from the resource-rich state.

The articles were follow ups to a Japan Times news report on March 29.

However, malaysiakini editor-in-chief Steven Gan said the news website will not be intimidated by this and is determined to fight the law suit.

Meanwhile, Lim asked if the chief minister plans to also sue Japan Times over its report?

"Taib should not pick on malaysiakini by threatening legal action but take on Japan Times, when the newspaper is the original source of the story of alleged corruption against him.

"For Taib not to sue Japan Times but only malaysiakini would be puzzling when malaysiakini was only reporting the original story by Japan Times," he said.

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