

Taib plans to sue Sarawak PKR leaders too
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Embattled Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud has threatened legal suit against two state Parti Keadilan Rakyat leaders.

Taib's lawyers, Kuching-based Reddi & Co Advocates, had issued a letter of demand to the state opposition party and two of its top leaders yesterday demanding, among others, a public retraction and apology within 48 hours for allegedly defaming him.

According to the letter, the two PKR leaders – state chief Wan Zainal Wan Sanusi (photo, left) and legal advisor See Chee How – had distributed leaflets concerning accusations of corruption allegedly linked to the chief minister and his family.

Taib – the country's longest serving chief minister – sent a similar legal letter to online news portal malaysiakini two days ago. Malaysiakini has vowed to fight the law suit.

At a press conference held this afternoon in Kuching, the two PKR leaders said they were ready to fight any legal suit from Taib, who has been Sarawak leader for 26 years.

"We're not in any way intimidated by Taib's threat for a defamation suit against PKR Sarawak," the party said in a statement today.

"PKR Sarawak, after its monthly state committee meeting today, declared that the party and its leaders are ready to fight the legal suit. Let the truth be unveiled in our courts."

In the letter of demand, Taib alleged that the leaflets printed and published by the party and distributed by its leaders were "highly defamatory and the words or characters meant and understood to mean that", among others:

- * The chief minister is a corrupt person.
- * The chief minister is a corrupt politician.
- * The chief minister has amassed illegal monies of RM32 million from the timber trade.
- * The chief minister is involved in illegal activities and that he should be investigated by the Anti-Corruption Agency.
- * The chief minister is unfit to be the chief minister of Sarawak.
- * The chief minister is not qualified to hold any political office, including as the president of Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB).

The PKR Sarawak statement said the leaflets (right), published in three languages, were taken from the news reports of both Japan Times and malaysiakini.

"The scandal involving RM32 million in kickbacks paid by Japanese shipping companies for timber from Sarawak had put all Sarawakians to shame," said the opposition party.

"We merely demanded the truth and if the chief minister chooses, let it be revealed by the courts. We are ready for the action, which has already been dubbed as the mother of all court battles."

Taib told to sue Japan's papers too

Wan Zainal said that the party would not back down from any fight against corruption, nepotism and abuse of power by the authorities.

"The scandal involving RM32 million in kickbacks paid by the Japanese shipping companies for timber from Sarawak, as revealed by the Japan tax authorities, has since been published by the Asahi Shimbun-International Herald Tribune and Kyoto Times in Japan," he said.

Wan Zainal suggested that the chief minister should commence defamation suits in Japan to clear his name as well as the name of all Sarawakians.

Meanwhile, Keadilan state assemblyperson for Padungan Dominique Ng told reporters he would be raising the issue in the next sitting of the state legislative assembly beginning on May 14.

He vowed to raise the issue at all available avenues as this was a matter of national interest and also affected the interests of the people of Sarawak, especially on what had happened to the money.

Meanwhile, DAP Bandar Kuching member of parliament and state assemblyperson for Kota Sentosa Chong Chieng Jen told malaysiakini he too would raise the matter in the forthcoming sitting of the state legislative assembly.

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