

**Taib's defamation suit: PKR duo file defence**  
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**Tony Thien**

Sarawak PKR leaders Wan Zainal Abidin Wan Sanusi and See Chee How today filed their defence against a defamation suit by Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud regarding an allegation of timber kickbacks.

In their 43-page statement of defence, filed with the Kuching High Court Registrar this afternoon, they pleaded justification and qualified privilege for publishing, printing and distributing pamphlets which were alleged by Taib to contain defamatory words.

Today was the deadline to file the defence after the writ of summons was issued against Zainal, the state PKR liaison committee chairperson and See, the party's legal adviser and Stampin branch chief.

About 30 party members and supporters were present to show moral support. Among them were the party's sole elected representative Dominique Ng (Padungan) and the party's newly-elected national treasurer William Leong.

Speaking to reporters, Leong said the people of Sarawak and Malaysia deserved to know the truth and the truth will be known when the trial starts.

### **Trial in Kuching**

Meanwhile, Ng said the trial will most probably be held in Kuching and that he is looking forward to seeing the chief minister give evidence in court.

The issue started following a report by a Japanese news agency Kyodo News, which was published by the Japan Times on March 29, 2007.

The report was about nine members of a Japanese shipping cartel transporting Sarawak logs to Japan and allegedly paying a Hong Kong agency, what the shipping lines claimed were tax-deductible genuine expenses, but which the tax authorities in Japan disallow.

The report said Regent Star, the Hong Kong agency, was closely linked to Taib and his family.

The report was later republished by numerous news organisations in Japan and elsewhere. Malaysiakini had also reported it.

Taib denied the allegation in a special statement in the recent state legislative assembly meeting and said he would take legal action against the various parties.

He has since filed defamation suits against the two PKR leaders, Malaysiakini and its editor-in-chief Steven Gan.

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