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DPM: Najib's right to sue web portal

JUSTICE: Bar chided over stand on suit
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D EPUTY Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the prime minister's decision to sue Malaysiakini was the right move aimed at seeking the truth.

Noting that it was Datuk Seri Najib Razak's right to seek justice in the courts, Muhyiddin said it was strange and unusual that the Malaysian Bar Council viewed the suit as an obstacle to media freedom and a violation of human rights.

"We want to inform that in this country, the media has freedom but, at the same time, there are limits within the law and certain powers that cannot be contravened, especially if it involves defamation or matters that can bring about embarrassment.

"What more in this matter, it involves the prime minister, specifically the government. So it is his (Najib's) right to take action to correct the situation through the legal process."

Muhyiddin said when similar action was taken by the leader of another country, the country's Bar and other parties did not say that it was against human rights and media freedom.

He said eventually it would be

the courts that would make the decision and not the prime minister.

Malaysian Bar Council president Christopher Leong recently issued a statement describing the suit against Malaysiakini as a bad precedent.

He said public figures needed to be fully accountable for their actions, and that those holding high public office — and political parties — should not resort to lawsuits to respond to allegedly defamatory criticism or comments as good governance and accountability required that they "endure the full brunt of free speech".

However, the council has since come under fire from various quarters, with people questioning its partiality considering it never said anything when opposition leaders resorted to suing others.

Yesterday, Gerakan national legal and human rights bureau chief Baljit Singh also hit out at the council, describing its statement as nothing short of hypocrisy.

He said the council should explain why it did not utter a single word when Pakatan leaders filed suits against various mainstream newspapers since 2008.

He said such double standards from the council when dealing with opposition leaders was shameful.

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