

Taib Withdraws Suit After Malaysiakini's Apology Over Libellous Articles
Bernama
January 4, 2012

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 4 (Bernama) -- Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud has withdrawn his defamation suit against Malaysiakini over libellous articles after the news portal made an apology in open court today.

High Court judge Rosilah Yop recorded statements read out by counsel of the two sides.

She also made no order as to costs after the two parties agreed to no order for legal costs.

Taib filed the suit in 2007, naming Malaysiakini's publisher, Mkini Dotcom, and the portal's chief editor Gan Diong Keng, also known as Steven Gan, as defendants after the news portal posted a series of 12 articles between April 6 and May 3, 2007, which he claimed contained words libellous of him.

The defendants' counsel Fahri Azzat, when reading out the statement, said that the articles published by the defendants were based solely on the news report of several Japanese media published at that time without verifying the truth of those news reports with any other authorities or the plaintiff himself.

"We understand that the Tokyo Regional Taxation Bureau has since reversed its decision on this issue, which renders the imputation of kickbacks to be wholly unfounded and so without basis," he said.

Fahri said the defendants regretted any unintended insinuations and agreed and had undertaken to refrain from further publishing any news report or statement about the plaintiff in relation to the issue of kickbacks involving the Japanese shipping companies paid to an offshore Hong Kong company known as Regent Star.

"We acknowledge that the articles caused the plaintiff embarrassment, distress and injury to his reputation and apologise for any inconvenience caused to him as a result.

"In keeping with our apology, we shall publish news that the Tokyo Regional Taxation Bureau had subsequently ruled that the sums paid by the Japanese shipping companies were legitimate payments," he said.

Taib's counsel Robert Lazar, when reading out the statement, said the defendants had now realised and acknowledged that the statements made by them were entirely erroneous and without foundation, which represent a grave libel on Taib's reputation as an individual, a politician and the head of the state government of Sarawak.

It also had caused Taib substantial damage, loss and embarrassment, he said.

"The defendants now accept their serious error in publishing the statements linking them to the plaintiff personally and admit the considerable damage, embarrassment and distress the defendant's publications of the statement have caused to the plaintiff," Lazar said.

He said the defendants were here today through their counsel to apologise and express

their sincere regret and unreservedly withdraw all the imputations cast upon the plaintiff by the publication of the statements.

In his suit, Taib claimed that the libellous words in the article carried a common meaning, to be understood among others, that he gained RM32 million as proceeds from illegal logging activities in Sarawak and had committed a crime and can have criminal proceedings brought against him.

He had sought damages for considerable losses, interest, cost and any other relief deemed fit by the court.

---BERNAMA

Copyright © 2012 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/newsindex.php?id=637899>