

Najib's call to advertise in Utusan a waste of taxpayers money
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The DAP condemned the Prime Minister's call to Government-linked companies (GLCs) to advertise in Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia, calling it another example of Putrajaya's waste of taxpayers money and an attempt to bailout the paper.

National Organising secretary Tony Pua said the Umno president's call showed that the paper had lost readers over its racist stand.

He said the prime minister's call showed that the Malay-language daily is no longer "commercially viable" and Najib was making a lame attempt to rescue the "racist and extremist mouthpiece".

"The blatant call by the prime minister himself for government agencies and companies to increase advertising in Utusan Malaysia is a poorly-disguised bailout attempt using tax-payers' monies," Pua said in a statement today.

In pitching for the party's mouthpiece, Najib yesterday said he realised that newspaper companies cannot rely solely on circulation to stay in business, and that advertising is needed to keep the 75-year-old newspaper afloat.

"I hope all government agencies, GLCs and private companies, especially those owned by Bumiputera, will show their support by giving more advertisements to Utusan.

"Only this can help keep Utusan on track," he said.

Najib said Utusan has done well in upholding the Malay agenda and upholding Malay nationalism.

"Utusan has remained strong and has never backed down in defending our race. It has played a role in opening up the minds of the rakyat to current information, be it in politics, crime, entertainment, and many other areas.

"Utusan hones and challenges the minds of its readers," he added.

The Pakatan Rakyat leadership has been wary of the Umno mouthpiece's style of reporting the news with many of them becoming victims of its slanderous reports.

Among the Pakatan Rakyat leaders who took Utusan to court for defamation and won are opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Penang chief minister and DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, DAP's Seputeh MP and former Selangor Exco member Teresa Kok and former Perak menteri besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Nizar Jamaluddin.

In January, Anwar won a suit against Utusan after High Court judge Datuk V.T. Singham found that the daily had defamed him in two articles.

In that judgment, the court ruled that the articles, which had implied that Anwar had intended to legalise homosexuality, was a gross mistaking of facts in complete disregard to the plaintiff's reputation.

The court also found that the news article was lacking in responsible journalism and that the defendants took high risk in publishing them on the front page, without verifying the truth.

In February, the Court of Appeal upheld a High Court decision ordering Utusan to pay RM200,000 in general and aggravated damages to Lim over a defamatory article.

Lim, who is Bagan MP and Air Putih assemblyman, had sued Utusan for defaming him in an article entitled, "Kebiasaan Guan Eng" published on December 20, 2011.

Utusan Malaysia columnist Datuk Chamil Wariya and Utusan Melayu openly apologised to Teresa Kok in the High Court in June, as part of a settlement in a defamation suit filed by Kok against them.

He also ordered Utusan Melayu to pay costs of RM50,000 and to publish an apology in the daily.

Kok had filed a RM30mil defamation suit against Utusan Melayu, which publishes Utusan Malaysia, and Chamil on December 12, 2008.

The suit was over a short story written by Chamil, who is also Malaysian Press Institute CEO, which allegedly referred, either directly or by innuendo, to Kok.

The story titled YB Josephine was published in Utusan Malaysia on October 12, 2008.

In July, the Kuala Lumpur High Court awarded Mohammad Nizar RM250,000 as damages in his suit against Utusan Malaysia over the WWW1 car registration number issue. - September 14, 2013.

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