

**Najib and Umno sue Malaysiakini over defamatory comments**  
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**By V. Anbalagan**

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is proceeding with his threat to sue a news portal over readers' comments published in the website last month.

His lawyers today served Malaysiakini with a writ of summons and the statement of claim which was hand delivered to the news portal administrators at its Bangsar office.

Najib, who is also Umno president, has named Malaysiakini publisher Mkini Dotcom Sdn Bhd, editor-in-chief Steven Gan and chief editor Fathi Aris Omar as defendants.

The other plaintiff in the suit is Umno executive secretary Abdul Rauf Yusoh.

The plaintiffs said that the compilation of readers' comments in two "Yoursay" articles published on May 14, namely "A case of the PM reaping what he sows" and "How much will Najib spend to keep Terengganu?", were defamatory.

The defendants will file their defence and the High Court has fixed June 18 for case management.

At the National Press Club award ceremony in Kuala Lumpur on May 26, Najib explained that his legal action against a news portal was not part of a media crackdown.

"I want to be very clear. This does not indicate any wider agenda. It is not part of any crackdown. It is not an attempt to silence critical voices," he had said.

Without naming Malaysiakini then, Najib said he believed the news portal had gone overboard.

"There is a difference between legitimate criticism and defamation. It is my legal team's opinion that recent allegations by an online news portal overstepped the line."

The prime minister took offence with Malaysiakini for publishing comments critical of him and Umno by readers regarding the short-lived Terengganu

political crisis where three Umno assemblymen, including former menteri besar Datuk Ahmad Said became independents.

This resulted in Umno-BN initially losing the majority in the state assembly. The three representatives returned to the party fold a day later.

Najib's lawyers had earlier issued a legal notice, demanding an unconditional apology within 48 hours from the issuance of the letter and a retraction of the alleged defamatory articles.

However the administrators of the news portal refused to budge as it was fair comment. – June 3, 2014.

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