

Harakahdaily boss ready to meet Najib in court over 1MDB commentary

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Harakahdaily managing editor Dr Rosli Yaakob is prepared to meet Datuk Seri Najib Razak in court over an article linking the prime minister's stepson with the controversial 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), published in the PAS organ last month.

Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia had reported last Friday that Najib had initiated legal proceedings against the portal for allegedly defaming him over the article.

"We have agreed to meet the prime minister in court," Rosli told The Malaysian Insider when contacted earlier this evening after he received Najib's letter of demand.

The decision was reached after discussions with Rosli's lawyer, Mohamed Hanipa Maidin, who is also Sepang MP, last Saturday.

"Let the court decide whether the article was slanderous or not," said Rosli, who is also a PAS central committee member.

The article in question, titled "Dana 1MDB biayai syarikat filem Riza Aziz?", had appeared in the PAS organ on February 12. It was a commentary based on The New York Times article about the wealth of businessman Low Taek Jho and his role as a property investor.

Low, who is better known as Jho Low, is said to be a close associate of Najib and was said to have had transactions with various parties, including Riza.

Riza, the son of Najib's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor from her earlier marriage, made headlines last year after he was revealed to be a producer of the award-winning movie "The Wolf of Wall Street" and his purchase of a luxury condominium in New York worth RM110 million.

The New York Times article, titled "Well connected at home, young Malaysian has an appetite for New York", described how Low, in 2010, began making some very expensive real estate deals in the US, using shell companies.

Rosli had written that the purchase of luxury condominiums had raised important questions about where the money was coming from. Said to be an advisor to 1MDB, Low had been paid a substantial amount for his role in the state investment vehicle, the Harakahdaily report said.

The article also questioned how Riza had obtained the funds to purchase the luxury property from Low and to finance his production house Red Granite Pictures.

Quoting The New York Times article, Harakahdaily said Riza had once commented that he had funded the movie with money obtained from "sovereign wealth", believed to be a reference to 1MDB.

Najib, in the letter, had said that Rosli's article was an "irresponsible slander that was nothing more than pure lies".

Hanipa, in a press conference today, had questioned why Najib had not also sued American daily The New York Times, which wrote the original article and where Rosli had based his article on.

"In the prime minister's letter from his lawyer, there were three demands – asking for the article to be retracted, apologise and for a certain amount to be paid in damages.

"My lawyer has advised that we do not agree to the demands and will wait for the original suit letter from the prime minister," said Rosli, who was a Bank Negara deputy governor, before he left to join politics.

"After receiving the letter, we will then decide the next move including meeting the prime minister in court," Rosli added.

"For now, we do not plan to retract the article or apologise."

In the letter of demand, Najib had named Harakahdaily and Rosli as defendants. It was sent to the Harakahdaily office by Najib's lawyer and was received by Rosli on February 26 at 3pm.

"After this, it will be up to the court to decide whether the writing was defamatory or not and I had my arguments when I wrote them," he said. – March 2, 2015.

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