

The Edge publisher gets leave to challenge suspension
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By V. Anbalagan

The publisher of The Edge Weekly and The Edge Financial Daily today obtained leave to challenge the Home Ministry's decision to suspend both newspapers for three months.

However, High Court judge Datuk Asmabi Mohamad declined the publisher's application to grant an interim stay against the suspension.

On July 27, the publisher filed the leave application and for the interim order to be heard on urgent basis.

The Home Ministry on July 24 suspended the publishing permit of both publications for three months from July 27.

A letter from the ministry stated that the papers' coverage of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal was "prejudicial or likely to be prejudicial to public order, security or likely to alarm public opinion or is likely to be prejudicial to public and national interest".

Asmabi delivered her ruling in chambers after hearing submissions from lawyers representing the publisher and the Home Ministry and the government.

Senior Federal Counsel Alice Loke told reporters that the court would hear on August 12, the publisher's application to stay the suspension pending the disposal of the judicial review.

"The interim stay was disallowed as the suspension was made on grounds that the publications are prejudicial to public order, national security and public interest," she said.

Lawyers Daryl Goon, Raja Eileen Soraya Raja Aiman and Joni Jacqueline Benedict appeared for the publisher.

This is the first time a publisher is seeking legal recourse following the suspension for its coverage of debt-ridden state investment firm 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

Home Ministry secretary-general Datuk Alwi Ibrahim in a statement on July 24 said the suspension of the publications was made after the ministry had scrutinised their reports on 1MDB and the reply to the show-cause letters issued earlier.

The ministry gave three reasons for suspending the publications, which it said, violated Section 7(1) of the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) 1984.

It said the headings and reporting by the two publications had raised questions and created negative public perceptions towards 1MDB, a Finance Ministry-owned firm.

The reports also implicated the government and national leaders, the ministry said.

Secondly, it also found the reports to be based on doubtful and unverified information, which it said might alarm public opinion and might be prejudicial to public order and national interest.

Thirdly, the ministry said the 1MDB issue is being investigated by a special task force and it was therefore inappropriate for reportage on the issue to create negative perceptions. – August 5, 2015

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