

## **PM's aide ordered to clarify defence in Mukhriz defamation suit**

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**By V Anbalagan**

### **Press secretary Tengku Sariffuddin Tengku Ahmad has to provide more information, failing which part of his defence will be struck out, says judge.**

KUALA LUMPUR: The prime minister's press secretary Tengku Sariffuddin Tengku Ahmad has been directed to provide further information on his defence in response to a defamation suit filed by Mukhriz Mahathir.

Judicial Commissioner Roslan Abu Bakar said there was merit in Mukhriz's application to request Tengku Sariffuddin to clarify his defence.

Tengku Sariffuddin was given 30 days to comply with his order.

"The defendant (Tengku Sariffuddin ) has to answer the interrogatories in an affidavit," he said.

Roslan said part of Tengku Sariffuddin's defence would be struck out if the additional information was not provided.

He fixed May 4 for case management.

On Jan 6, Roslan had also disallowed the prime minister's press secretary to strike out the suit against him by the former Kedah menteri besar and incumbent Ayer Hitam assemblyman .

The judge said there were triable issues to be determined although he allowed Tengku Sariffuddin's application to remove two articles in Mukhriz's statement of claim.

On May 3 last year, Mukhriz, represented by Mohamed Hanif Khatri Abdulla, filed the suit over four media statements issued by Tengku Sariffuddin on April 15, 20, 23, and 26.

The four press releases were "Prime Minister's Press Secretary's Statement on Donation Confirmation by Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister", "Prime Minister's Press Secretary's Statement on Former DPM's Reuters Interview", "Mukhriz Mahathir Statement: Response by Prime Minister's Press Secretary" and "Prime Minister's Press Secretary's Statement on Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir".

In his defence Tengku Sariffuddin said he had never defamed Mukhriz in any of his media statements seeking to clarify issues and untruths spread about Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Tengku Sariffuddin, 54, said the statements were published based on qualified privilege and without malice.

He said his media statements were made in his official capacity to prevent rumours or political allegations against the prime minister.

Lawyer Jahaberdeen Mohamed Yunoos, representing Tengku Sariffuddin, said he would obtain instruction from his client whether to appeal to the Court of Appeal.

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