

Jan 17, 2011

To News Editors:

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CALLING OFF DOMESTIC INQUIRY ON HA'TA WAHARI
17 JAN, 2011.**

The National Union of Journalists is disappointed that the domestic inquiry (DI) scheduled for a day (Jan 17) did not materialise.

DI chairman Mohd Bashir Abdul Rahim, for unclear reasons, called off the proceedings which only lasted about 30 minutes.

We were prepared to go on despite the possibility of me (NUJ General Secretary) being disqualified to represent Ha'ta.

I was surprised the chairman, at the outset of the proceeding which started at about 10.45am, stated that this is a domestic inquiry and that an outsider was barred from appearing for Ha'ta.

I called on the chairman to follow the basic procedure; that the prosecuting officer read the charges against Ha'ta and determine whether he pleads guilty or not.

I informed Mohd Bashir that the prosecuting officer could raise a preliminary objection as to why I cannot represent Hata.

I further informed the chairman that I must be given the opportunity to rebut the prosecuting officer's points for the three-man DI panel to arrive at a ruling.

I told him that there is nothing in Utusan Melayu's (UM) collective agreement which suggested that a union representative or a person who is not a UM employee is barred from representing an accused working for the company.

I told the chairman that he was biased and prejudiced by asking me to take the seat in the public gallery and his failure to follow procedure tantamount to turning the DI into a "kangaroo court."

We also requested the chairman to take a short break with the hope the panel would start a fresh and follow procedure so that the DI will proceed.

After recess, the chairman appeared adamant that I could not participate in the DI.

Even at this juncture, we did not know who is the prosecuting officer as he/ she did not get up to start the DI.

Hata told the chairman that he would be at a disadvantaged position if I (Anbalagan) did not represent him but was prepared to go on.

He then placed a digital recorder before the chairman to ensure he did not miss out anything during the proceeding.

The reason is that he need not take down notes when cross examining the prosecution witnessess.

Ha'ta and myself tried to reason out but no avail.

Suddenly the chairman said that he was calling off the inquiry. We told the chairman that he must put on record that Ha'ta was not the party who called off the inquiry.

Ha'ta's employee, UM, has instituted the DI as the management claims that he had tarnished the image of the organisation by making disparaging remarks in news portals, The Malaysian Insider, Malaysiakini, Merdeka Review, and The Sun newspaper between September 21 and October 14 last year.

The NUJ maintains that Ha'ta made the statements in his capacity as NUJ president and that Utusan has no power to discipline officials from the organisation.

On behalf of the executive council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Anbalagan', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

V.ANBALAGAN
General Secretary