

PRESS STATEMENT

5 August 2026

CIJ Concerned Over MRCB's RM100 Million Lawsuit Against Veteran Journalist P Gunasegaram

The Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) is concerned over [the legal action taken by Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad \(MRCB\) and its executive vice-chairperson, Salim Fateh Din, against veteran journalist and columnist P Gunasegaram over an article concerning the LRT3 Shah Alam Line.](#) The plaintiffs are reportedly seeking RM100 million in damages over allegations that the article portrayed MRCB's involvement in the project as being linked political patronage, procurement irregularities and abuse of public resources.

The legal action against Gunasegaram raises clear concerns of strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPP), particularly given the disproportionate damages sought and the legal measures that could burden and intimidate journalists reporting on matters of public interest. Lawsuits of this scale can have a chilling effect on media freedom and discourage journalists from scrutinising powerful entities and reporting on issues of public concern.

The LRT3 project concerns public infrastructure, public procurement, government expenditure and the use of public resources. Questions surrounding its procurement process, costs and delays are matters that the public has a legitimate interest in scrutinising. It should also be noted that Gunasegaram has maintained that his article constituted fair comment on a matter of significant public importance, and that the facts referenced were drawn from publicly available records.

Legal action of this nature, particularly where it involves claims of RM100 million in damages and seeks injunctions to remove publications and restrain future reporting, can impose significant financial and procedural burdens on journalists and media organisations. The threat of substantial damages, especially given its disproportionate nature, can encourage self-censorship and deter journalists from reporting on powerful corporations, public projects and issues of governance, adding to the existing culture of fear pervading media spaces.

The media, as the fourth pillar of democracy, must be able to scrutinise institutions, corporations and individuals with significant influence without fear that critical reporting will expose them to potentially crippling legal action. Freedom of expression under Article 10 of the Federal Constitution necessarily encompasses the ability of the media to investigate, question and comment on matters of public concern. CIJ therefore urges all parties to ensure that legal mechanisms are not used in ways that unnecessarily restrict legitimate public-interest reporting.

Where there are concerns regarding the accuracy or fairness of media reports, accessible and less adversarial mechanisms for addressing grievances should be prioritised, including appropriate avenues through the Malaysian Media Council. It would also signal that the company's intention is not to punish the press, but rather to correct the record. As such, given MRCB and Salim's claim that Gunasegaram did not seek their comments, action should have been taken through the Malaysian Media Council as the legitimate institution with the mandate to safeguard media freedom and responsible and ethical reporting.

More broadly, Malaysia must establish clear legislative safeguards against strategic litigation that has the effect of burdening journalists and members of the public who participate in matters of public interest. Clear anti-SLAPP mechanisms should be introduced to enable the early dismissal of lawsuits that are primarily intended to stifle legitimate speech, reporting and public participation.

Strategic litigation should remain a measure of last resort, particularly given the existence of the Malaysian Media Council as an avenue for resolving disputes between the public and the media. Its multi-stakeholder composition provides a more consultative and democratic mechanism for

addressing concerns about media reporting, while ensuring that grievances can be heard without unnecessarily resorting to litigation.

A free press must be able to scrutinise matters of public interest without fear or favour. We call for a whole-of-society commitment to protecting journalists in carrying out their essential role in holding power to account and safeguarding freedom of expression in Malaysia. It is also in this regard that it is critically imperative that the government pass a robust and progressive right to information legislation which would facilitate access to information held by public bodies in addressing matters of public interest.

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Wathshlah G. Naidu
CIJ Executive Director

For further inquiries, please contact Natasha at comms@cijmalaysia.net

The Centre for Independent Journalism is a non-profit organisation that aspires for a society that is democratic, just and free where all peoples will enjoy free media and the freedom to express, seek and impart information.