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## Malaysian newspaper sues bloggers in landmark case

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KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) - A leading Malaysian newspaper has sued two bloggers for defamation, a company executive and one of the defendants said on Thursday, in a case the opposition says could stifle freedom of expression.

The New Straits Times, the country's oldest newspaper group, had filed suits against Ahirudin Attan and Jeff Ooi over numerous postings in their respective blogs attacking top company officials, Ahirudin and a NST executive said.

"The papers have been filed. The nature of the suits is defamation," said the executive, who declined to be named. He did not elaborate.

"I am now looking for a lawyer to represent me," said Ahirudin, a former editor of Malay Mail, one of the newspapers in the NST stable.

**MORE** → Ooi and NST Chief Executive Syed Faisal Albar could not immediately be reached for comment.

This is the first instance of bloggers being sued for libel in Malaysia, where Internet chatrooms are mushrooming amid tight government controls on mainstream media.

Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang said the suits would have a "chilling effect" on freedom of bloggers and citizen journalists.

"It will have far-reaching consequences for the healthy, mature and democratic growth for free speech and expression, not only on the Internet but in the country as a whole," he said in a statement.

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