

Apco to face the axe in August?
Malaysiakini.com
April 8, 2010

Controversial media consultant Apco Worldwide Sdn Bhd will not have their contract renewed once it expires in Aug 4.

A highly-placed government official said that Apco, engaged by the government to oversee their international media strategies, will not have their yearly contract extended.

"He (Prime Minister Najib Razak) is not very happy with the way they have been handling themselves in the recent controversy and are becoming a liability," said the source.

NONEHe added while it appears that Najib (left) will give Apco the axe to reduce pressure on the BN government for hiring the international image consultancy firm, which has been recently linked to Israel, the premier is generally not satisfied with their services.

It is understood that Apco had started work for Najib as early as June last year even before the contract was signed.

But when Najib was interviewed by the Associated Press during his visit to Beijing last June, where he was asked about slain Mongolian model-cum-translator Altantuya Shaariibuu, he was less than impressed by the company's preparation for the interview.

Apparently the question had caught Najib off-guard, but he was still able to handle the question and even took the opportunity to joke about it.

Apco alienating PM's officers

It is also understood that Apco's presence has stirred uneasiness even among Najib's media strategists.

Malaysiakini understands that the PM's media advisor Jalaludin Bahaudin, a vocal critic of Apco in private, has been at loggerheads with Najib's press secretary Tengku Sariffuddin Tengku Ahmad over Apco's role in the Prime Minister's Department.

"It is mainly because Jalaludin thinks that Apco does not know what they are doing," said the source.

Tengku Sariffuddin could not be reached for comment while Jalaludin refused comment when contacted.

Journalists in the foreign press circles have also said that Apco seemed to be "aloof" when it comes to local issues with the potential to grab worldwide attention.

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim had previously alleged that Apco was formerly known Mind Teams Sdn Bhd and that it was Omar Mustapha, a managing partner in Ethos Consultancy, who had introduced Tengku Sariffuddin to Apco.

RM28 million contract?

Apco was tasked with "promoting and improving Malaysia's image overseas", as confirmed by Minister in Prime Minister's Department Koh Tsu Koon in Parliament last October.

NONE Apart from their bread and butter task of setting up interviews with foreign wires such as BBC and CNN, their job is also to repair the government's image in the eyes of the US government, which has traditionally been sympathetic towards Anwar.

The Washington-based firm has also brought in international public relations figures to give training to various press secretaries to ministers.

While Minister in Prime Minister's Department Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz said in Parliament yesterday that the total payment of the contract has not decided, it is understood that the bill comes up to RM28 million.

Controversy regarding Apco Worldwide reached a crescendo last month when Anwar had alleged that the 1Malaysia concept was derived from the One Israel initiative, and that Apco had a hand in both.

Both Apco and Najib have since gone on the record to deny the accusations.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/128635>