

**PM splurges RM50k in attempt for US coverage  
Malaysiakini.com  
July 22, 2010**

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak paid RM50,000 (US\$15,000) to a Washington-based political consultant in April this year in an attempt to get an opinion-editorial article written by him published in one of the major newspapers in the United States.

And should the article eventually appear in print, the prime minister will have to fork out an additional RM50,000 as a 'success fee' to the consultant.

This is revealed in documents filed under the Foreign Agents Registration Act by Quinn Gillespie & Associates (QGA), a top public relations and lobbying firm in Washington DC.

According to the documents obtained by Malaysiakini, QGA was assigned by another consultancy firm, The Laurus Group, to try and convince a major US newspaper to carry Najib's article.

The Laurus Group, an obscure public relations firm whose website is still under construction, had apparently been hired by the Malaysian government to provide 'public relations services' during Najib's week-long trip to Washington DC and New York from April 10 to 16 this year.

Najib, who was accompanied by his wife, Rosmah, met US President Barack Obama on April 12 in Washington. The couple later left for New York where Rosmah was feted and awarded the inaugural International Peace and Harmony Award at a gala dinner attended by a number of top Hollywood stars.

Non-refundable project fee

In the April 14 letter of agreement between the two consultancy firms – QGA and Laurus – it is stated that QGA 'will provide public and media relations services on behalf of the government of Malaysia related to the placement of an opinion editorial authored by the prime minister of Malaysia'.

It added that Laurus would pay QGA a 'non-refundable project fee of US\$15,000 for the period beginning April 14, 2010 and ending April 20, 2010'.

Should QGA succeed in placing the opinion editorial in a major-market print media publication, the client (Laurus), will pay QGA a success fee of US\$15,000.

"The success fee shall be paid within 30 days of the date on which the opinion editorial appears in a publication meeting the criteria described above'.

The agreement did not identify the major newspapers which the opinion piece by Najib was to appear in.

It is unclear whether Najib had to pay the full sum of around RM100,000 for the publication of his article. A check on leading US newspapers – Washington Post, New York Times and the Wall Street Journal – indicated that no such opinion piece appeared.

However, the Washington Times – a newspaper founded by Unification Church leader Sun Myung Moon – did produce a supplement on Malaysia on the eve of Najib's arrival in the capital city (right).

But this did not appear to be the said opinion piece as Washington Times is not considered a "major-market paper". The payment for the Washington Times supplement could come from other sources.

Interestingly, the offices of both Laurus and QGA are located on the same floor in a building in Connecticut Avenue, Washington, DC.

## Rosmah's ad in New York Times

The Laurus Group is also somehow linked to the controversial two-page advertisement in New York Times congratulating Rosmah (below) for her peace award.

NONEOnline news portal Nut Graph has over the past two months reported that New York Times initially said that the advertisement – which cost between RM1 million and RM1.5 million – was paid by the Malaysian government.

But the Times retracted its statement a few weeks later, stating that the advertisement was not paid by Putrajaya.

It, however, has refused to divulge the identity of the individuals who did so.

At the same time, the Business Council for International Understanding which presented Rosmah with the one-time award, also wrote to Nut Graph expressing regret over its 'well-intended gesture of welcome and congratulations' to honour 'Malaysia's First Lady' being turned into a political issue.

Their e-mail communication on the matter was copied to Hank Jones, the chairperson of the Laurus Group, whose name appeared in the letter of agreement between his firm and QGA.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/138084>