

Najib Should Follow BBC's Example And Apologise
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According to news reports, the BBC World News will today broadcast the apology "from Kuala Lumpur to Khartoum" in four time slots worldwide for having compromised its editorial integrity through programmes involved in the recent "news fixing scandal. The UK daily The Independent said that FBC Media made eight pieces for the BBC about Malaysia while failing to declare it was paid £17 million by the Malaysian government for "global strategic communications".

According to The Independent, the global apology by BBC to an estimated 74 million people around the world for a news-fixing scandal is expected to read:

"A small number of programmes broadcast on BBC World News between February 2009 and July 2011 broke BBC rules aimed at protecting our editorial integrity. In the case of eight other programmes, all of which featured Malaysia, we found that the production company which made the programmes appeared to have a financial relationship with the Malaysian government. This meant there was a potential conflict of interest, though the BBC was not aware of it when the programmes were broadcast."

According to the report, investigations into the scandal "uncovered 15 breaches of editorial guidelines" of which eight were related to FBC's programmes on Malaysia. It is extremely shameful when the Government has to resort to such tactics worthy of African tinpot dictators in trying to whitewash its image. What's worse, this was all done at taxpayer's expense.

This has also been confirmed by Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak who last year admitted in a written parliamentary reply that the Government had paid RM83.8 million to media consultancy company FBC Media for the duration of three years from 2007 for "consultancy services, advice and management of a communication campaign". This was as part of a contract between the Prime Minister's Office and FBC Media that was signed in 2007 and renewed twice.

The BBC also used FBC to make a documentary about the spring uprising in Egypt without knowing the firm was paid to do PR work for the regime of former dictator Hosni Mubarak. Najib Tun Razak should direct his Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to apologise for paying RM84 million to to burnish the Najib administration's image on global broadcast networks just as the BBC is apologizing for accepting payments in exchange for a positive image for countries with a poor record of democratic practices and corruption.

The Prime Minister's Office must therefore take full responsibility for this utterly disgraceful episode and follow in the footsteps of the BBC by apologising for embarrassing our country.

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