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'FORMER PM WANTED TO REPAIR TARNISHED IMAGE'

# 'DR M SPENT MILLIONS TO MEET WITH BUSH'

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Son of late minister says lobbyists given money to set up meeting in May 2002

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**M**ILLIONS of ringgit were allegedly paid to lobbyists to arrange a meeting with the then United States president George W. Bush and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2002.

Datuk Megat Fairouz Junaidi claimed that his late father, Tan Sri Megat Junid Megat Ayub, had met with several people and paid lobbyists, upon receiving an instruction from Dr Mahathir to arrange for the meeting.

Megat Fairouz said his father received the instruction from Dr Mahathir in April 2001 with the intention to boost the former prime minister's image among the US administration.

He said Dr Mahathir's image was tarnished, especially after the unpleasant statement made by the then US vice-president Al Gore during a dinner held in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur in November 1998.

In his speech, Gore reportedly rebuked the Malaysian government for allegedly suppressing freedom and praised those who had rallied against Dr Mahathir's administration following the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the post of deputy prime minister back then.

"My late father was instructed to set up a meeting between (Tun) Dr Mahathir and the then US president since 2001.

"Following the instruction, my late father met with several quarters and paid a sum of money to lobbyists to secure the meeting, which eventually took place in May 2002."

Megat Fairouz said this when asked to comment on the statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak that the former premier's meeting with the former US president in 2002 was arranged by a lobbyist.

On the amount of money paid to the lobbyists, Megat Fairouz said he was not informed by his father about the exact amount, but he claimed that it involved millions of ringgit.

Megat Fairouz's statement came after Najib hit out at Dr Mahathir for paying millions of ringgit to a Hong Kong-based lobbyist to set up a meeting with Bush.

In disclosing the matter, Najib said Dr Mahathir had paid RM7 million to lobby and meet with Bush through a lobbyist residing in Hong Kong.

Najib was quoted as saying that the lobbyist was paid by awarding him with a lucrative project, which he and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi were aware of.

Despite spending millions of ringgit, Najib said the former prime minister was not accorded

a warm reception that he had received from President Donald Trump.

Najib made the statement on Friday evening upon his arrival at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport from the United States at the invitation of Trump.

He said Dr Mahathir had engaged the services of a lobbyist from Hong Kong to secure the meeting with Bush.

Najib also said that the lobbyist was awarded with a lucrative coal project.

He chided the former prime minister for not getting an exceptional reception that he received from Trump on Tuesday, despite spending millions to meet Bush.

Meanwhile, a source told the *New Sunday Times* that part of the millions was also paid to a Washington-based lobbyist.

The source claimed that he was with the late Megat Junid during a dinner at Willard Intercontinental Hotel in Washington during Dr Mahathir's visit.

The source claimed that Bush had refused to meet Dr Mahathir the next day after he made sarcastic remarks about Israel during his speech at a dinner held at the hotel.

He claimed that Bush refused to meet Dr Mahathir till the last minute and only met the former premier after the lobbyist pushed for the meeting between the two leaders to take place.



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad



George W. Bush