

Putrajaya's ex-PR firm also promised coverage for Microsoft, says UK paper
The Malaysian Insider
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 29 — FBC Media, the international media firm fired by Putrajaya last month, also guaranteed coverage for Microsoft on CNBC, the Independent newspaper in the United Kingdom revealed today.

It said FBC wrote "a nine-page letter to Microsoft's senior communications managers" promising coverage in the World Business programme that the media firm produces for CNBC.

"FBC guaranteed that news items would appear in their World Business programme," the newspaper also quoted the IT giant as saying in a statement.

Malaysia ended its contract with the public relations firm last month after it was revealed that government leaders routinely appeared in paid-for interviews on global television programmes on CNBC.

FBC is now being investigated by British media regulator Office of Communications (Ofcom) as well as the BBC and CNBC for producing content on Malaysia without revealing it received RM58 million from Putrajaya.

Both broadcasters have dropped FBC programmes from their lineup.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) terminated FBC Media's contract last month, the second PR deal it has ended in recent months after US-based APCO Worldwide was dropped for alleged links to Israel.

Whistleblower website Sarawak Report had claimed that interviews and other programmes produced by FBC had cost the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition millions of ringgit as part of its bid to boost its international image.

The deal came to light after supplementary supply Bills showed that the PMO paid RM57.7 million between 2008 and 2009 to FBC for a "Global Strategic Communications Campaign".

FBC is also said to have approached top US current affairs magazine The Atlantic to host an event featuring Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

The Malaysian Insider also reported that Najib has engaged a new team that includes those behind former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's "New Labour" to reinvent himself as a "cool" leader as he prepares to lead BN into elections for the first time.

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