

**Najib mum about FBC Media allegations**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 18 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak refused today to address allegations that Putrajaya paid RM58 million to FBC Media to burnish its international image on various international broadcast channels.

When asked about British media regulator Office of Communications' (Ofcom) probe into programmes made by FBC Media for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the prime minister refused to comment.

"No, I cannot comment on that," he said before ending the press conference that followed an Umno Supreme Council meeting this evening.

Ofcom was reported yesterday to be mulling "a full investigation of the content in question under the Broadcasting Code," according to British daily The Independent.

In its statement carried by The Independent, the BBC said: "FBC has now admitted to the BBC that it has worked for the Malaysian government. That information was not disclosed to the BBC as we believe it should have been when the BBC contracted programming from FBC.

"Given this, the BBC has decided to transmit no more programming from FBC while it reviews its relationship with the company," the state-owned broadcaster added.

It is understood Putrajaya has now ended its contract with FBC Media after an exposé revealed Malaysian leaders routinely appeared in paid-for interviews on global television programmes on CNBC.

The Malaysian Insider understands that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) terminated FBC Media's contract last week, just months after another public relations firm, APCO Worldwide from the United States, met an ignominious end for alleged links to Israel.

Global broadcasters, including CNN and CNBC, have been scrambling to contain any potential fallout after allegations of impropriety surfaced following the exposé by whistleblower Sarawak Report.

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

FBC Media's dealings with the Malaysian government came to light after supplementary supply bills showed vast payments made for a "Global Strategic Communications Campaign".

The records showed that between 2008 and 2009, RM57.7 million was paid by the Prime Minister's Office to FBC Media for the campaign.

US-based broadcaster CNN denied last week it was paid to interview Datuk Seri Najib Razak during his visit to London last month, but questions remain about the role played by its

anchor John Deferios after the latter's FBC Media programme "World Business" was axed early this month by rival network CNBC.

The spotlight is on the relationship between FBC Media — the British publicity firm led by media giant Alan Friedman with Deferios still listed as its group president — and broadcasters like CNBC, CNN and the BBC.

As a result of the allegations, the BBC has also said it will suspend programmes produced by FBC Media and investigate the company.

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