

AGM reminder

The Annual General Meeting will be held on **Thursday, 25 March 2010, 5.30pm** at:

Ogilvy Room, Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide,
11th Floor, Menara Milenium, 8 Jalan Damanlela,
Bukit Damansara, 50490 Kuala Lumpur

Townhall Meeting

Recently, the Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture and IPRM, have stepped up the push for the PR Act. As industry professionals whose future will be affected by the proposed legislation, PRCA Malaysia urges you to join us at a PR Industry Townhall meeting to understand the negative impact of this initiative and why the industry should unite to oppose it.

The Ministry and IPRM have painted the industry as one under siege and in need of rescue, which as you may know, is highly misleading and irresponsible. The Malaysian PR industry has grown significantly in size, quality and professionalism, especially in recent years, and its professionals now compete equally with their colleagues internationally. The Malaysian PR industry is also one that is experiencing great vibrancy with the infusion of digital communications such as the use of online and social media, gaining greater influence, understanding and credibility within the larger communications mix.

More importantly, the industry in Malaysia is one that is open, liberal and globalised, conforming to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Last year, the Prime Minister announced the government's decision to fully liberalise 27 service sub-sectors, including public relations under the management consulting services sub-sector. The proposed PR Act will be a direct violation of the government's policy as well as the fundamental principle of free trade in services.

Details of the meeting are as follows:

Time : 6.30pm
Date : 25 March 2010
Venue : Ogilvy Room
RSVP : secretariat@prcamalaysia.org

President's Letter to The Star

8th March 2010

Mr. Wong Sai Wan
Deputy Executive Editor
Star
Menara Star, 15 Jalan 16/11
46350 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan

Proposed PR Act ill-conceived, will violate WTO rules

It would be greatly appreciated if the views of the Public Relations Consultants' Association of Malaysia (PRCA Malaysia) as contained in the attached document be published in the Star. The document is in response to the article "The great need for a PR Act (page N30) *Star*, 6th March 2009. Members of PRCA Malaysia view with great concern the contents of the article by Poziah A. Raman which does not do justice to the PR industry and practitioners

PRCA Malaysia formed as an independent non-profit organization in 1999 brings together professionals from specialist public relations and communications firms; corporate communication departments and students who are dedicated towards enhancing the standards and the practice of public relations in Malaysia. The Association serves as a forum for members to discuss industry-related issues, such as quality, professional development, evaluation and training. It is the organiser of *SpeakEasy*, *StraightTalk* and the *PR Leadership Series*, featuring speakers from public relations and other professions from various industries. It is also the organiser of the annual Malaysia Public Relations Awards (MPRA) which began in 2008. PRCA Malaysia currently has a membership of over a hundred practitioners including 17 corporate members.

Thank you

Yours sincerely,
Julia Ahmad
President, Public Relations Consultants' Association of Malaysia (PRCA Malaysia)

Copy: Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai
Group Chief Editor

Proposed PR Act ill-conceived, will violate WTO rules

It is unfortunate that the writer's representation displayed a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Malaysian public relations industry. To paint the industry as one under siege and in need of rescue is highly misleading and irresponsible. To safeguard public interest, this misinformation needs to be set right.

The Malaysian PR industry has grown significantly in size, quality and professionalism, especially in recent years, and its professionals now compete equally with their colleagues internationally. In fact, Malaysian PR professionals are highly sought after and well compensated regionally in markets such as Singapore, Hong Kong and China, to name a few.

In addition, a number of Malaysian PR campaigns have been recognised at regional award shows such as the Asia Pacific PR Awards and the SABRE Awards, which are highly regarded for their integrity and credibility. Hence, to suggest that the Malaysian PR practitioner is 'hardly more than a messenger boy in the entire communications system' is uncalled for and well off the mark.

The Malaysian PR industry is also one that is experiencing great vibrancy with the infusion of digital communications such as the use of online and social media, gaining greater influence, understanding and credibility within the larger communications mix.

More importantly, the industry in Malaysia is one that is open, liberal and globalised, conforming to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Hence, any move to legislate the profession is a retrogressive step that runs contrary to the globalising world where barriers are broken down and divides bridged.

Last year, the Right Honourable Prime Minister announced the government's decision to fully liberalise 27 service sub-sectors, including public relations under the management consulting services sub-sector. This is very well received and supported by many enlightened industry professionals as a strong indication of the Government's policy to fully comply with GATS in line with progressive international trade development. The proposed PR Act will be a direct violation of the government's policy as well as the fundamental principle of free trade in services.

Therefore, to claim that 'PR will deteriorate like a dinosaur, whose continued survival is threatened, and soon, when the floodgates of economic globalisation widen with WTO and AFTA compliance, go extinct' is both grossly ironical and misplaced. The fact is, the local PR industry, ahead of many other services sectors, has been thriving despite unfettered competition in a fully liberalised and globalised environment, much to the pleasure of the government including the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

The proposed PR Act will bring serious damage to an industry that is best served by seasoned public relations professionals working towards the betterment of practitioners and the PR profession in the country, without compromising on the fundamental principle of keeping the Malaysian PR industry a globalised, open and liberal one.

Public relations consulting in specific, provides strategic management counsel similar to management and marketing consulting, including advertising and branding services. In this realm, the industries have excellent track records for effective self-governance that is dictated by market forces, keeping it in close step with global development and best practices in order to stay relevant. None of these industries are governed by legislations anywhere in the advanced economies.

The proposed PR Act also does not seem to address the issue of a shrinking talent pool of suitable prospective PR professionals due to outdated curriculum and tertiary training devoid of robust but necessary industry input, especially in public institutions of higher learning, as well as structural economic issues that is causing severe industry brain drain.

These, amongst others, are the REAL issues that need well thought out actions, rather than blind mandatory conformity for reasons that are unclear and questionable.

Legislation is not the answer towards ensuring that the Malaysian PR industry reach the highest level of professionalism and the recognition it deserves. The matter of raising standards for the industry is an on-going effort and one that should be undertaken in all seriousness by all industry players be they corporate practitioners, clients, consultants or academicians. This effort encompasses daily practice, upholding of professional ethics and most of all, building and maintaining the integrity, transparency and credibility of all PR professionals and the relevant professional bodies.

Julia Ahmad

President, Public Relations Consultants' Association of Malaysia (PRCA Malaysia)

Contact PRCA Malaysia via e-mail at secretariat@prcamalaysia.org or visit our website for the latest news: <http://www.prcamalaysia.org>
