

Rosmah not necessarily Najib's Achilles Heel
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INTERVIEW Despite negative connotations hovering over 'First Lady' Rosmah Mansor, a pollster believes she may not be the liability to husband, premier Najib Abdul Razak, that many think she is.

"A lot of stuff is said about Rosmah. (The) mainstream media paint her as a very caring, concerned person, and she is being covered in the media on a frequent basis," said Merdeka Centre director Ibrahim Suffian.

"(But) the media not aligned to the government paint her as a very negative person."

Whether or not her negative image will drag down her husband's political career would depend on the battle for media coverage, Ibrahim said.

"It depends on what part of the news reaches the voters," he argued, pointing out that the traditional media's coverage is wider than that of new media.

Ibrahim (right) conceded, however, that the antics of people close to a leader could lead to the individual's downfall.

As an example, he related how former premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi received a very positive reaction from the people when he took office.

"But towards the end, political attacks on those around him, the 'fourth floor boys' and so on, gained traction."

Similarly he believe that there is the possibility that the forces at play will try to paint Rosmah in a negative light and succeed in attacking Najib through her.

"It all depends on how well the media is engaged. But, at the end of the day, it could very well backfire for the opposition as well, if whatever they are saying is untrue," he cautioned.

If this happens, this may strike a blow at the credibility of her detractors instead.

'Attacks may backfire'

He cited the consistent attacks on Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim as one example how personal attacks may backfire.

"A lot of people may think that it is easy to villify someone, but look at Anwar, he has been attacked non-stop since 1998.

"But he is still there, an influential figure who commands support from a segment of the public."

Ibrahim contends that, if accusations against Rosmah turn out to be untrue, her accusers would lose out.

"But if (their claims are) true, then they (PM and Rosmah) have a lot of explaining to do."