

Rosmah, Curtin controversy hits Aussie papers
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Major Australian newspapers today gave full-fledged reports on the widespread criticisms against the West Australia-based Curtin University for conferring a honorary Doctorate of Letters on Rosmah Mansor, the wife of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH), The Age and WA Today all highlighted reports that a campaign has been called to boycott the university, with students pouring scorn online.

SMH and The Age, major dailies owned by Fairfax Media, referred to a picture of a Curtin University degree certificate torn up.

Malaysiakini's check showed that the picture has been widely circulated on Facebook, including on the university's page.

The online news portal WA Today, also owned by the Fairfax group, reported that a video of a degree certificate being burnt "in disgust" was posted on YouTube.

However, the authenticity of the documents could not be independently verified.

"The award prompted a flood of outraged comments on Curtin University's Facebook page, many claiming the university's reputation had been tarnished," says the SMH report.

"A Facebook page, titled 'Boycott Curtin University Until Rosmah Mansor's Doctorate Revoked', has 1,697 'likes,' and hundreds of posts," the WA Today report says.

The SMH also quoted a critic who described Rosmah as only entitled to "a doctorate in shopping" for living a lavish lifestyle.

"I would agree to give Rosmah a doctorate in shopping only. I am ashamed now to be a graduate of Curtin," says the quote published by the newspaper.

The three newspapers also described Rosmah as having a reputation as a big spender, while elaborating on her A\$100,000 spending at a Sydney fashion boutique in January, the US\$24 million diamond ring and the US\$200,000 designer handbag.

All these accusations have been denied by Rosmah.

The WA Today reported Malaysian students as pointing out to Permata as a government-funded project.

"This would be the equivalent of Julia Gillard's partner using Australian taxpayers' money to set up day-cares all over Australia and receiving an award from a foreign university for his philanthropical work," the paper quoted an open letter written by a former student.

Curtin University yesterday apologised for referring to Rosmah as first lady of Malaysia, but defended the award to Rosmah as she had done a "distinguished service" for early childhood learning.

After days of bombardment by Malaysians on its Facebook page, the Curtin University today suspended comments on its Facebook wall.

"Due to continuing infractions of our terms of use and Facebook's terms and conditions, and the risk of breaching both the Defamation Act 2006 and the Commonwealth Criminal Code, we have unfortunately

no choice but to temporarily suspend comments on this wall," it said in a Facebook posting.

The suspension comes after repeated warnings to netizens to be civil when commenting on the university's honorary doctorate award to Rosmah.

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