

Rosmah the Jonah
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The self-styled First Lady Rosmah Mansor and British Prime Minister David Cameron share one thing in common; their presence at sporting events is unwelcome.

When Cameron watches British sports personalities compete or sends them 'good luck' messages, they have gone on to lose in their events. The 'curse of Cameron' fills them with dread.

After the Thomas Cup loss (2010) and yesterday's Olympic badminton final, is Rosmah aware that people think she is jinxed and that she is now known as 'Rosmah the Jonah'?

Rosmah also makes a mockery of her husband, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's declaration: "We hear your problems on the cost of living."

The announcement that she would fly to London to support Lee Chong Wei, Malaysia's most hopeful 2012 Olympic participant, sparked an unprecedented amount of criticism. Her last-minute gesture of support does not appear to be genuine and her trip to London is badly judged, ill-timed and seems self-serving.

In addition, her comments, in a mainstream paper, have irked many people: "He (Chong Wei) is like my own son. When he got through to the finals, I told my husband that I am going to London to fulfil my promise.....Chong Wei always phones me before he plays an important game."

Rosmah's acquaintances claim that she is a good and lively badminton player and that her 'petite' physique hides her agility on the court.

Whether or not her opponents are involved in their own form of 'match-fixing', i.e. to allow her a win, is another matter. As the patron of the Badminton Association of Malaysia, Rosmah has every right to offer our badminton players support; but she only flew out to bask in the limelight that would shine on him, if he won the gold medal.

Why should Rosmah be allowed to steal the thunder from Lee? Why add to his pressures?

He has a rigorous schedule, he is faced with mental and physical demands, and the sheer stress of having to live up to the expectations of a nation watching his every move, thousands of kilometres away are enormous. Why distract him?

Najib told the press in Pekan that his wife was accompanied by the Deputy Prime Minister's wife Norainee Abdul Rahman. The rakyat is eager to find out how much they have paid for Rosmah and her entourage.

Had Lee won the gold medal, photos of the beaming Rosmah and the victor would have been incorporated into election posters. Had he lost, there would have been photos of Lee's most compassionate supporter consoling him.

Lee would have unwittingly become a propaganda tool for Umno, in the lethal mix of politics and sport.

Ungrateful, sexist Malaysians

The Malaysian Olympic contingent has other sports personalities and their contributions and achievements should not be belittled.

Both Rosmah and Najib, the de facto minister for women, community and family development, failed to appreciate Malaysia's only shooter - 29-year-old Nur Suryani Mohd Taibi from Perak.

Malaysians are an ungrateful and sexist lot. Instead of commending Nur Suryani on her achievements, she has received a lot of criticism for going to the Olympics whilst pregnant. Her detractors conveniently forgot that Nur Suryani qualified on merit.

She is ranked 47th in the world in the 10m air rifle event and had won a gold medal at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in India. She gained her place for the Olympics in Doha, Qatar, last January.

If the doctors were unduly worried for the safety of both mother and baby, then they would have said so and this view would have been endorsed by the International Olympics Committee. No mother would have put her baby's interests last.

Malaysians forget that, in the olden days, many women would have worked right up to the day they gave birth. In the bush today, many women work until a few minutes before delivery. Many do not have a choice but must take care of the family and provide food for them.

Najib's most memorable comment about Nur Suryani's participation was that his government would pay all the medical costs should her baby arrive early in London. He also said that Nur Suryani's husband would be able to accompany her to London.

He did not mention Nur Suryani being a role model for women or the importance of having the confidence and belief in oneself, needed to achieve anything, including competing at the Olympic Games.

The rakyat is angry that, while they struggle to make ends meet, Rosmah flew to London on a seemingly frivolous whim. Will she be consoling herself, whatever the outcome of the badminton finals, with a Hari Raya shopping spree in London? Najib's 'We hear your problems on the cost of living' appears to be another empty slogan.

Rosmah mocks another of her husband's declaration to the rakyat: "We hear and understand your needs on education."

If Najib was really listening, the money that was spent on Rosmah's entourage could have been spent on improving sports facilities in schools, placing dedicated physical education teachers, improving games equipment, increasing the hours spent on sport, and purchasing land to be converted into sports fields for our schoolchildren.

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