

If PM's 'wealth' not from dad, then from where?

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's belated statement supporting his four brothers that their father, former prime minister Abdul Razak Hussein, lived a frugal and moderate lifestyle has opened a new can of worms.

DAP's Petaling Jaya MP Tony Pua said Najib's remarks in Utusan Malaysia and Berita Harian are a subtle rebuttal of his own office's explanation that the prime minister's substantial wealth was from inheritance.

"His denial that the source of his family's wealth comes from 'legacy family assets' begs the question of the exposé in the first place. Where exactly did all these money come from?" he asked in a statement today.

Pua (right) said the fact is that Najib's family is able to spend and acquire assets globally, worth millions of ringgit, as reported by the New York Times, even though the Najib only earns about RM350,000 a year.

"Therefore, if Najib Abdul Razak believes that his source of unusual wealth and a lifestyle of exuberant luxury is all acquired scrupulously, then he must explain how he obtained them when his only occupation was as the Pahang menteri besar (1982-1986), cabinet minister (1986-2004) and deputy prime minister (2004-2009), before assuming the prime ministership in 2009.

"I am certain the prime minister will agree with me that his lack of transparency and the exposé of his family's hidden and not-so-hidden wealth will only encourage more unhealthy speculations on the origins of his family's outsized wealth," Pua said.

Rosmah's Birkin handbags

He also cited a New York Times report that said Najib's wife Rosmah Mansor was photographed with at least nine different Birkin handbags, typically costing between US\$9,000 (RM32,000) to US\$150,000 (RM530,000) a piece.

This is on top of invoices obtained by the newspaper that showed millions of dollars worth of jewellery ordered for Rosmah.

Pua also cited Najib's stepson Riza Aziz's (on the left) purchase of a US\$33.5 million (RM117.5 million) apartment in New York and a house in Beverly Hills worth at least US\$17.5 million (RM61.5 million) despite previously being just a junior-level officer at HSBC, as reported by the New York Times.

In an extensive report published on Feb 8, New York Times spotlighted Najib's wealth and also sought an explanation from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The PMO responded with this statement: "Neither any money spent on travel, nor any jewellery purchases, nor the alleged contents of any safes are unusual for a person of the prime minister's position, responsibilities and legacy family assets."

Subsequently, Najib's four brothers issued a rare public statement, stressing that their father Abdul Razak was a principled man known for his frugality and any suggestions otherwise tainted the memory of the statesman.

The Feb 24 statement, which excluded Najib, was signed by Johari, Nizam, Nazim and Nazir.

Yesterday, Najib finally endorsed the statement of his brothers and reiterated that his father lived a frugal and moderate lifestyle.

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