

KJ: Najib's wealth report just speculation
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Khairy Jamaluddin is the first cabinet minister to come out in defence of the prime minister over a New York Times report regarding Najib Abdul Razak and his family's lavish lifestyle.

Speaking at a recent dialogue in New York, he said the article should not serve as a distraction from the government's long term transformation efforts.

The youth and sports minister described the report as nothing more than "speculation".

"Some of that is just reporting (with) some evidence and confirmation (like) the story on the New York Times which received a response from the Prime Minister's Office.

"On the particular purchases, it is a news story which has yet to be substantiated or confirmed that (it) was the case.

"I think unless that is the case, you cannot comment further on that," he added.

Khairy was asked if the Prime Minister's Office's statement that it is "not unusual" for someone of Najib's stature to have such a lifestyle and that he enjoys "legacy family assets" contradicted the government's claim of transformation.

He was also asked if the remark by the prime minister's wife Rosmah Mansor about hairdressing services costing RM1,200 has hurt the government's efforts.

Khairy said Rosmah's statement was "off the cuff" and that the thrust of the message was about the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which will be implemented on April 1.

"The government transformation programme, whether it is on education, economy or employment opportunities does not hinge on a New York Times article and it certainly does not hinge on an off the cuff statement by the wife of the prime minister," he added.

'We're not oblivious'

Among others, Khairy said the government's policies are now "outcome-based" with ministers made to meet the prime minister regularly to explain why they have not met specific key performance indicators.

"I have to meet the PM to explain why we didn't get eight goals in the Commonwealth Games...(I) can't just say, 'Well sir, it was just luck'," he added.

The government, he said, has also cut back its spending and revised the budget following a drop in oil prices and is working hard on policies like technical education to ensure employability of tertiary education graduates.

"You may think we are oblivious but we are not oblivious. We understand that we are confronted with extremely, extremely serious problems.

"Change takes times. We are on the path of change, of transformation, there are obstacles in our way," he added.

Back home, the prime minister had come under the microscope over the report and the PMO's response.

His four brothers also expressed concern in a joint statement, saying that talk surrounding their late father's wealth could taint his reputation.

This sparked off speculation of a rift among Najib and his siblings.

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