

Najib dancing gets social tongues wagging

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By Anne Muhammad

A video of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak showing off his dancing skills at his daughter Nooryana Najwa's wedding do in Kazakhstan has set off a buzz on social media.

However, for conservatives back home in Malaysia where religious authorities impose strict controls on entertainment activities for Muslims, Najib and his wife Rosmah Mansor gyrating to the tune of "Pretty Woman" may not receive a stamp of approval.

Nevertheless, the prime minister's special officer, Rizal Mansor, insisted there was no wrong in it, particularly as Najib and his wife were caught by surprise.

Rizal, who was among the 250 guests flown to Almaty, Kazakhstan, for the wedding, said Najib and Rosmah, along with their daughter and her new in-laws, were asked to go on the stage before the cake-cutting ceremony.

He added the master of ceremonies then suddenly played the popular American song 'Pretty Woman' and asked that they dance along, for this was part of the Kazakh culture.

"The emcee called the groom's family and then invited (Najib's family) onto stage.

"The prime minister and wife are sporting enough, so they just followed the (Kazakh) culture.

Rizal said the emcee had wanted to create a "happy atmosphere" before the cake cutting ceremony.

"If everyone was just stiff, it would appear they were not happy with their children getting married," he told Malaysiakini.

'No fuss at Malay weddings'

Some 250 guests from Malaysia were flown to Kazakhstan on April 17 to attend the two-day wedding reception of Nooryana Najwa Najib and Daniyar Kessikbayev.

Yesterday, Rizal claimed not a single cent of government funds was spent to fly the guests to Kazakhstan.

He had said the cost were either borne by the guests themselves or the groom's family.

Little is known about the Kazakhstan leg of the wedding - that had separate receptions in Kuala Lumpur and Pekan - back in Malaysia but the one-minute-18-second video of Najib and Rosmah dancing has generated much attention.

Rizal said even at Malay weddings, dances like the "joget lambak" are not uncommon, therefore it shouldn't come as a surprise if Najib danced at his own daughter's wedding.

"At other weddings, people also do the joget lambak and no one kicks up a fuss.

"Anyway he (Najib) was dancing with his wife and daughter," said Rizal who has served as Najib's special officer for six years.

Rizal said he did not know how the video was leaked online, adding that he did not want to accuse anyone.

In an interview with Malaysiakini published last Friday, Rizal had also claimed the wedding bash for Nooryana and Daniyar on March 28 in Kuala Lumpur was also borne by the groom's family.

Najib has received a fair amount of criticism over what has appeared to be an ostentatious wedding affair, with the loudest critic being his predecessor Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Last week, Mahathir at a forum questioned the massive Kazakhstan entourage for the wedding that he complained had thus far eluded mainstream reports.

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