

## **'What's wrong with Najib being called rich?'**

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EXCLUSIVE Extravagance is one of the allegations that continues to haunt Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

But Tourism and Culture Minister Nazri Abdul Aziz sees nothing wrong with being labelled as rich.

"What's wrong with that? I am saying I am also rich, why can't I live a rich lifestyle?"

"It's bad if you are wealthy but you don't care about the people. At least we, Najib and I, are accused of being wealthy, but we are serving the people.

"The PM's wealth is not an issue here, he doesn't live beyond his means. He's got money to build his house, only one house," he told Malaysiakini in an exclusive interview.

Najib, his wife and their children, have often been accused of living in the lap of luxury.

For example, the spotlight fell on Najib's stepson Riza Aziz after it was reported that the junior bank executive turned Hollywood producer owns a RM100 million penthouse in New York.

As far as Nazri is concerned, if people have an issue with this, then they should pose their queries to Riza as the prime minister is not answerable for issues concerning his stepson.

### **Nothing wrong with Rosmah either**

The minister also defended Najib's wife, Rosmah Mansor, whom former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad said behaves more like the prime minister.

"Mahathir said so because he has a score to settle with Najib [...] how can you accept everything he says as the gospel truth?"

"She is a very opinionated person. So, what's wrong with her being high profile?" he asked.

Nazri (photo) also deflected criticisms against his boss for not wanting to partake in a debate on 1MDB, choosing instead to respond through his blog.

He said this medium provided Najib with time to think and pen his answers in a relaxed environment.

"His (Najib's) way (of responding) is fine. Debate is out of the question.

"Through blogging, you are on your own. You have all the time to think before replying, it's more relaxed.

"But when you debate, it's difficult [...] the atmosphere and environment. Further, you have the facts, but you can't refer to them (on the spot)," he added.

Nazri reiterated that Mahathir had described himself as an "ordinary citizen" hence there is no need for the prime minister to debate with him.

"This is never our practice, never before had we any prime minister debate with an 'ordinary citizen'. Check your history before jumping to conclusions," he said.

"If an ordinary citizen asks him (Najib) for a debate, then I will say, 'Sir, don't do it'," he said, adding if Najib agreed, it would set a precedent and more would throw similar challenges.

According to Nazri, the right person to debate the prime minister would be opposition leader Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail or other foreign leaders.

To a question if a national leader should be articulate, charismatic and bold to face the media, the Umno veteran said, "It's not necessary, as people have different talents."

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