

'If unemployed can make money, so can Rosmah'

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By Kow Gah Chie

If old folk and housewives can make good money through investments, a minister is asking why the prime minister's wife, Rosmah Mansor, cannot have RM2 million in her bank account.

Deputy Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Minister Tajuddin Abdul Rahman said this as a response to allegations that RM2 million had been deposited this year into Rosmah's account.

Despite admitting ignorance of the source of the said money, the Pasir Salak MP defended the PM's wife nonetheless, arguing that an unemployed wife can enjoy lucrative income from her investments.

"There are many old nyonya (women), housewives and old folk who sit in the house, doing nothing but investing, here and there.

"They buy houses and shares, and gain income from these investments," Tajuddin (photo) said.

Many Malaysians even purchase properties overseas, he told Malaysiakini yesterday.

Given her worldwide connections, he said, Rosmah's income may even be RM10 to RM20 million.

"What is wrong if she gets the money in legitimate ways? What is the problem with receiving cash?

"Rosmah is a graduate and has worked from young. Don't look at her as the wife to the prime minister only, she is also an individual. Give her some space and understanding," said Tajuddin, who is also an Umno supreme council member.

"Please give her the benefit of doubt. Everybody has a right to earn money in a legal and moral way," he argued.

Following the expose by Sarawak Report, Rosmah confirmed through her lawyer that the account belongs to her, but she denied the money came from the Finance Ministry's debt-laden 1MDB.

Rafizi: Reveal source of income

Meanwhile, the National Oversight and Whistleblowers Centre (NOW) called for Rosmah to reveal the source of the RM2 million reportedly deposited into her account.

"Rosmah should also declare her assets as well," said Rafizi Ramli, the founder and executive director of NOW.

Rosmah may have denied the money came from 1MDB, but that isn't enough to clear the air, Rafizi argued.

The problem is not so much about the legitimacy of the money, but the questioning by members of the public as to whether these people are living beyond their means, he said.

The people may even link this with the 1MDB fiasco, he noted.

"Thus, her denial and prayers are not enough. If she really wants to help Najib, she should explain to the people where her money came from," Rafizi told Malaysiakini, adding that her refusal would leave people wondering if she had something to hide.

In other countries, it would be a scandal if a politician's wife has money beyond her occupation, he said.

"Given that Rosmah is not in employment, it is normal for people to ask where she got the money from," he added.

Rosmah's refusal to reveal the source of her money, Rafizi added, would deepen the people's negative perception toward her husband, who is being implicated in the scandal.

Tajuddin: No need to declare

However, Tajuddin shot down Rafizi's call for Rosmah to declare her assets and reveal the source of her money.

"Who is he to ask for that?" he said.

"The opposition must not cook up all these stories to inculcate a culture of distrust in the community, where people distrust the government, distrust their party comrades, and friends.

"We don't go for this. We don't want to get involved in this stupid work of making allegations against people. We don't want to make society suspicious (of everything)," Tajuddin said.

"Do you think the people will be happy (if Rosmah chose to declare her assets?) No, they will come out with more stories.

"I have been in politics in 40 years. I am not stupid, for I know the opposition's agenda and direction," he added.

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