

Spending public funds for a private jet?

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COMMENT When former prime minister's wife Endon Mahmood was fighting against cancer, she travelled to the United Kingdom for her chemotherapy treatment. As far as I remember, she took a public flight.

I am told that whenever she stayed in a particular hotel, she had a spot in the breakfast lounge where she would have her meal. She did not expect VIP treatment, but the waiters and waitresses at the restaurant automatically respected her and reserved the place for her.

Such was Endon, a woman of great honour and well-loved by Malaysians at large. She knew how to be chaste and remain humble.

So did the wives of other prime ministers, including former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's wife, Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, who have contributed to the nation for many decades in so many areas that I think she deserves the Tunship that she was conferred.

Dr Siti Hasmah was the first Malay lady doctor in the country, an achievement that we should all be proud of.

Yet, none of these wives of the country's former prime ministers is known to have hired private jets for their oversea trips, whatever the occasion.

At least, there was no such allegation hurled against them, even during Dr Mahathir's era in the manner that Rafizi Ramli [could pinpoint](#) of Rosmah Mansor. Rosmah is the only wife of a Malaysian prime minister who has been known to jet-set around in private jets.

With the country currently going through a bad economic patch, such extravagance by someone who is not even recognised as a government leader should have been avoided.

Hearing the [explanation](#) given by her aide Rizal Mansor, I doubt if there is any good reason for her to go on a private jet.

She would have to choose between attending the Girl Guides event and the 3G Children Welfare Award at the Global Good Governance Award 2016 in Istanbul.

If even prime ministers and ministers have been known to miss certain events, there is no reason for Rosmah to spend public funds for a private jet.

What Rafizi has discovered has been confirmed by Rizal himself. Unless Rizal is telling us that Rosmah had paid for the private jet, in my opinion, Rosmah has no business in hiring the Airbus A-319 private jet owned by Emirates Airlines for her private trip to Istanbul.

Find out how many such trips

We want to know how many of such trips has Rosmah been making using either private or government jets, and how much has been spent on the private trips alone when she could have travelled on public flights.

It is not what Rosmah has contributed to the children in Permata, but the principle as to whether she has the right to hire private jets using public funds. With Dr Siti Hasmah's contributions to the nation, Rosmah's contribution in Permata pales by comparison.

I therefore urge our parliamentarians to raise this question in the August House and debate it further, so that the ministry concerned could be held accountable for Rosmah's alleged extravagance at the expense of the people.

Meanwhile, no more such trips should be allowed especially at a time when the country is going through very tough economic conditions.

The people are already burdened by the Goods and Services Taxes (GST) and many people have lost their jobs as a result of companies closing down.

Affected by the news on the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, foreign investors have also withdrawn their funds from Malaysia.

Najib and Rosmah should set good examples by going on an austerity drive themselves. For one, Rosmah should not be spending RM1,200 on her [hairdo](#) when the people do not even have enough to make ends meet.

The money otherwise spent on the hairdo could be contributed lovingly towards the children who are under her care.

This would be the sacrifice expected of a chaste woman, whose husband is supposed to lead the nation. Otherwise, where is the leadership by example?

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