

Najib: 'First Lady' not higher than the queen
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Aidila Razak

Prime Minister Najib Razak today explained that the term 'First Lady' used to describe his wife Rosmah Mansor, does not elevate her to a position higher than the queen.

hulu selangor 180410 tian chuaThe premier's written reply, made in response to Batu MP Tian Chua's (right) question in Parliament, however failed to address whether it was appropriate in the first place to use the term for Rosmah.

Chua had asked if the prime minister was aware that referring to his wife as a 'First Lady' goes against Article 32 of the federal constitution.

The Article reads" 'The Consort of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (to be called the Raja Permaisuri Agong) shall take precedence next after the Yang di-Pertuan Agong over all other persons in the federation.'

The prime minister attempted his definition of a term that he says does not exist in Malaysia.

"Most feel that in the context of Malaysia, 'First Lady' refers to the Raja Permaisuri Agong.

"But this is wrong as the Raja Permaisuri's position is higher than that of the 'First Lady'.

"The terminology does not exist at all in the federal constitution, therefore referring to (the Raja Permaisuri as such) is absolutely wrong.

"But if the term is used at all, the 'First Lady' in Malaysia has a lower position than the Raja Permaisuri Agong."

Advertising Rosmah

The issue first drew public attention when a full two-page colour advertisement featuring Rosmah appeared in the New York Times in April.

The advertisement was a congratulatory message to 'Rosmah Mansor, First lady of Malaysia' on being awarded the International Peace and Harmony Award 2010.

According to news portal The Nut Graph , the cost of a one-page advertisement in the New York Times is estimated at RM580,000-740,000. This suggests that the cost of placing the Rosmah advertisement would be much higher.

When The Nut Graph queried the American newspaper as to who placed the advertisement, the reply was that it was "an ad agency on behalf of the government of Malaysia".

However 18 days later, the paper made an about-turn saying that it was mistaken.

NONEIt eventually claimed that "well-wishers" comprising of Rosmah's "family and friends in USA and Malaysia" placed the advertisement.

Pressed as to who actually paid for the advertisement, the New York Times cited the need to

maintain confidentiality and stopped responding.

Najib (right) said: "The Malaysian government or any of its agencies is not involved, be it in the planning, booking or payment of the advertisement."

He added that the American NGO which conferred the award on Rosmah paid for the advertisement.

"As such, I believe that the matter of cost to government does not arise and this matter should longer be questioned," he said.

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