

'Unfair' to stop Taib from amassing fortune
Malaysiakini.com
Disember 8, 2010

Abdul Karim Hamzah, chief political secretary to Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud, has told Radio Free Sarawak (RFS) that it is only "fair" that Taib should accumulate wealth in public office.

In an interview with RFS, a shortwave station outside the control of the government, Abdul Karim dismissed criticism of the enormous wealth of Taib's family, as reported by the Sarawak Report website. He also discussed the controversial Sarawak Government White Paper on 'unhealthy political practices', proposed by Abdul Karim himself.

"Personally, I see there must be limitations to everything, you cannot have a free flow of everything... the freedom of speech, there are limitations. I mean to take up an action (for libel) is not as simple (as it seems)... sometimes it's better to just leave things as they are, because it will, after a while, quieten down."

NONEHe brushed off the furore surrounding detailed descriptions on Sarawak Report of Taib's property fortunes in Europe and North America, and land acquisition schemes in Sarawak. "The way I see it, it's not causing any problem, lah. What is the problem with Sarawak Report? Have they been saying something that is very defamatory or bad? I don't think it's wrong to be rich.

When asked how Taib and his children could have achieved their fabulous wealth based on his modest ministerial salary, he replied: "How can you use that salary as a yardstick, you know? I mean, you must give people an opportunity...I mean, if Taib is the chief minister, I don't think we should stop the children, (that) the children cannot be rich or the family cannot be rich.

"He has been in power for the last 40 years... he has been open to a lot of opportunities, whereby his children also can participate in business, and then, using the kind of networking that they can have, and then build up their riches."

azlanAsked what these opportunities were, Abdul Karim explained: "Well, opportunities to participate in business and things like that, you know? Take for example... if you are a minister or chief minister, then somebody comes to you and wants to sell a piece of land at a very cheap price... and then through the years, that value of land suddenly shoots up one thousand times... and you sell it off and make some money, is that tantamount to corruption?

"If you use your position to secure certain businesses or certain contracts, then I would say that would be an abuse of power, but then that depends again, whether that is happening or not..." he said, avoiding the topic of allegations of Taib distributing contracts to companies under the control of his family members, including CMS and Naim Holdings.

Asked whether cronyism exists in Sarawak politics, Abdul Karim said: "You cannot, you

must not equate Taib's family with himself... he has got a lot of 'cronies'. Everybody knows him.

"So, after 40 years in the government, don't you think he deserves to have some level of satisfaction, or some level of wealth that he could accumulate, in the right way? Are you trying to tell me politicians must be poor? Only businessmen are allowed to be rich? That's very unfair!

"I mean, if that is how we look at it, then we are not practising democracy, because you are depriving a politician from... having a good way of life. Only the businessmen are allowed to be rich, to fly around, have holidays? The politicians are not?"

White Paper to exclude 'undesirables'

"The purpose of the White Paper is to... to... to... more or less define what are the... who are those people who are undesirable, I would say, who could be a threat to the... there are certain... certain quarters of people, whether they are politicians, whether they are NGOs, or whether they are from the media even, whether they are from Malaysia or from overseas, who seem to be wanting to break us up, who seem to be... I mean they couldn't be bothered, they don't have any love for us," he explained.

NONE "That's why we want the state to set a proper guideline, who can be welcome and who should not be welcome, to identify what are the things that we can consider as a threat, who are those people who we know have blatantly tried to run down the government, tried to create instability, whether economically or politically, in the state.

"These are the people we should stop, whether they are from the government or not from the government, or whether they are from overseas or whether they are from Malaysia itself, or religious... this covers every angle, I would say.

"We have every right to look after our state... Immigration is in our hands, when we formed Malaysia... we have got that right, that immigration right.

"If we feel that they are not desirable to us, if they are known to be... who have been running us down, from their writing, from their blogs, I think if they are not a friend to Sarawak, I would say, then we stop them!

"The opposition always thinks it is against them, not realising that it is also against certain people in Barisan Nasional (BN)." Abdul Karim declined to name those in BN who may be kept out of the state.

In response to speculation that the state government wants to muzzle websites like Sarawak Report, Abdul Karim replied, "We can't stop them from publishing, they can have their own right, because the world is free, you see... the Internet world, you can put anything inside there. But then when it comes to coming into our state, we do not want them."

Abdul Karim concluded his RFS interview by alleging that Barack Obama, and British leaders like former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, are all "filthy rich", and that Taib has done nothing wrong in accumulating wealth.

KERUAH USIT is a human rights activist - 'anak Sarawak, bangsa Malaysia'. This weekly column is an effort to provide a voice for marginalised Malaysians. Keruah Usit can be contacted at keruah_usit@yahoo.com.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/150232>