

Najib denies Rosmah bought US\$24m ring, Russian mob links for in-laws
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By Jahabar Sadiq

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 21 — In his first comments on the issues, Datuk Seri Najib Razak has denied his wife bought a US\$24 million diamond ring or that his Kazakhstan in-laws are linked to the "Russian mafia" as reported by Indonesia's top-selling daily, Kompas earlier this month.

Kompas has since apologised to the prime minister for its August 4 report but mystery remains why the ring from New York jeweller Jacob & Co. was addressed to Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, according to pictures widely available on the Internet.

"I was surprised with the report. Because, the facts, I know is not true at all," Najib told Kompas in an interview published in its Sunday edition today. The interview with Kompas journalist Jimmy S Harianto was conducted last Thursday.

"Furthermore, it links the name of a head of government of a country that we have important links with," the prime minister added.

In a column on August 4, Kompas described Rosmah's ties with soon-to-be in-law Maira Nazarbayev as close although it provided no evidence to back its claims and added, "Maira Nazarbayev, who lives a lifestyle ala Imelda Marcos supposedly has links to the Russian mafia.

Maira is the former wife of Kazakhstan President Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev's brother Bolat Nazarbayev. Nooryana Najwa, the 22-year-old daughter of Rosmah and Najib, was recently betrothed to Maira's son, Daniyar, who was her college sweetheart.

Kompas said it was made to understand by the Prime Minister's Office that the article was used by "certain political interests" and distributed with photocopies sent throughout the country ahead of elections that could be held as early as this year although Najib played coy over the timing of the general election.

The Indonesian daily said the report was said to be detrimental to the federal government as it linked Rosmah and Perimekar Sdn Bhd, the company involved in the controversial commissions for the Scorpene submarine deal.

"That is not true," Najib stressed, adding, "The ring was not ordered by her whether to be bought or to be used for private display," a reference to pro-Umno bloggers who had said the ring was brought in for private display for four days.

In its article today, Kompas also reported the prime minister as saying the issue of Maira Nazarbayev being linked to the "Russian mafia" is untrue.

Kompas chief editor Rikard Bangun also apologised today to Najib and his family over the report although it is understood that the Prime Minister's Office has used back channels to threaten a suit against the Indonesian daily. However, the daily has not flinched except for the apology.

In the interview, Najib also touched on the impending elections by saying that his ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition has improved conditions for a better chance at the polls as it

has done well in by-elections over the past two years.

"But I am realistic. Because by-elections is not an absolute measure. The absolute measure is the general elections and the situation will be different.

"So we have to work with every effort for an agenda and programme that can satisfy and give confidence to the people. Not just government programmes, economic programmes but ones that touch the people. Programmes that can relieve and satisfy the people especially in the context of global inflation and price spikes in world commodities," Najib said.

The prime minister also touched on democracy, saying the models varied from country to country and noted that Indonesia had experience from a restricted system to a more open democracy.

He said Malaysia's system has evolved and the ruling party shared the same fate as the opposition among the voters. "The vote is decided by the people," Najib declared.

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