

**Women's groups dispute Rosmah, say child marriages not rare**  
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A coalition of women's rights groups today hit out at the prime minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor for saying that child marriages are rare in Malaysia, and insisted it was not the case.

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) said Malaysia still had a long way to go in overcoming child marriage, and tackling the problem would require an accurate and responsible depiction of the trend.

"Child marriages are definitely not rare in Malaysia as mentioned by Datin Seri Rosmah," said JAG in a statement today.

"JAG deploras downplaying the gravity of occurrences of child marriages in Malaysia."

JAG said that in 2010, Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Heng Seai Kie said approximately 16,000 girls aged below 15 were married.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2014 report recorded that more than 15,000 Malaysian children were married off before the age of 19, said JAG.

It added that the statistics, while "worryingly high", were only cases of child marriages that were reported.

"With the adoption of the resolution to end child marriage by the Human Rights Council earlier this year, Malaysia should do more to acknowledge the problem of child marriages and take better measures to end it.

"Therefore, we call for more responsible and accurate depiction of the occurrences of child marriages in Malaysia especially when presented by public figures, as child marriage is a human rights violation."

Bernama reported that Rosmah had told a breakfast meeting in New York that child marriages were rare in Malaysia due to a good education system and low poverty rate.

The meeting was attended by the Netherlands's Princess Mabel Van Oranjestad and spouses of leaders from Panama and Zambia, the report said.

Rosmah is accompanying Datuk Seri Najib Razak on his working visit to the United States to attend the United Nations General Assembly. – October 2, 2015.

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