

Pua debunks Najib's 'transformation' rhetoric
Malaysiakini.com
May 21, 2011

Although the government has argued that Malaysia's drop in the 2011 World Competitiveness Ranking is due to the perception of local business community, an opposition MP pointed out that it had actually debunked the government's multi-million ringgit public relations exercises and transformation rhetoric.

The annual ranking released by Switzerland-based Institute of Management Development (IMD) on Thursday ranked Malaysia 16th out of 59 participating countries, six slots lower than last year.

The report is compiled from two-thirds of quantitative or statistical data and one-third qualitative or perception data. The latter obtained through feedback from the local private sector from January to April.

"Malaysia had performed badly in two out of the four main factors of the survey - government efficiency and business efficiency, falling from 9th and 4th to 17th and 14th respectively.

"The other two factors are economic performance and infrastructure," read the report.

Hours after the report was published, International Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamed (left) issued a statement, blaming the result on negative perception.

Malaysia's competitiveness performance has been blunted by more perception-based factors of business efficiency and government efficiency, where 90 percent of the perception data showed a sharp drop, affecting the performance of these two factors, according to the statement.

Millions on image building mirage

This argument was dismissed by DAP MP for Petaling Jaya Utara Tony Pua, saying that Mustapa's explanation itself was worse than the ranking result, insinuating that its inaccurate.

However, when the country was perched on the 9th and 4th ranking respectively for these two factors (government efficiency and business efficiency) last year, the minister himself gloated using these same statistics in public and in parliament!" said Pua.

"If it is really a problem of just perception as highlighted by the minister, then perhaps the entire public relations team in Pemandu (Performance Management & Delivery Unit) as well as the Prime Minister's Department, such as Apco should be sacked for doing such a terrible job of improving the perception of our government despite the hundreds of millions spent on public relations and related exercises," he said when contacted yesterday.

The DAP publicity secretary pointed out that the government has never done or spent so much on public relation exercises before, launched in conjunction with multiple programmes - NEM, GTP, ETP, 10MP etc - written beautifully by expensive consultants such as McKinsey and Boston Consulting Group.

However, Pua (right) believed that the steep decline in rankings for the two factors is due to the fact that the business community and the public at large have seen through the glossy 'transformation' programmes, the snazzy event launches and the polished speeches delivered by ministers and other members of the government.

Rhetoric vs reality

"After two years of 'transformation' rhetoric, they have realised the real change has not been forthcoming, critical reforms have been quietly shelved while government business favouring politically-connected parties are continuing business as usual," said Pua.

"No number of fancy public relations consultants will be able to change that 'perception' if the government fails to deliver on its promises of change and transformation," he added.

Pua called on both the prime minister and Mustapa to recognise the fact that it is the government's failure to implement the necessary reforms as well as its repeated U-turns in policy-making which sparked the stark drop in global competitiveness rankings.

"The failure of the duo to recognise this will only result in further loss of competitiveness and ultimately the country failing to breakout of its middle-income trap to achieve the much coveted 'high-income status'."

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/164715>