

**Mahathir: NEP made some non-Malays rich, too**  
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today brushed aside claims that the New Economic Policy (NEP) had only benefitted the Malay super rich, stressing that the affirmative action for the Malays had also made non-Malays millionaires.

"People only mention the few Malays who became millionaires... but there are also (those from) other races who became millionaires during my time.

"You can count the number of non-Malays who became millionaires or even billionaires during my time.

"My good friend Vincent Tan became a billionaire; Robert Kuok became a multi-billionaire during my time when the NEP was being implemented - the monopoly of sugar and flour gave him the kick start," Mahathir told a press conference after a youth dialogue in Kuala Lumpur today.

He was responding to Gua Musang MP Tengku Razeleigh Hamzah's statement this morning that the NEP had only benefitted Malay capitalists.

While adding that the NEP's results were not all as expected, Mahathir pointed out that it had also hugely helped normal Malays.

"They forget that under the NEP, 500,000 Malays who otherwise would not have high education were given higher education.

"He (Tengku Razaleigh) knows very well that when Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB) was implemented, he was finance minister and it enabled nine million bumiputeras to own shares in companies which otherwise they would not own," he said.

The NEP has had a slew of achievements and the focus should not be on the few negative aspects.

"I'll be happy to list out all the achievements of the NEP. It is not only the few millionaires who are supposedly my cronies, but my real cronies who fail in business, nobody mentions them," he added.

'He always wanted to be PM'

Mahathir also took a swipe at Tengku Razaleigh, who is fondly known as Ku Li, for his often differing stance with the government.

"Of course there are differences between the government and the opposition, and he's not exactly opposition, but of course he had always wanted to be prime minister.

"Unfortunately, his strategy was wrong. He broke away to form Semangat 46, he challenged me and lost. It's a democratic country.

"He spent RM30 million to challenge me and he lost, I did not spend RM30 million," he said.

Commenting on Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim's offer to debate with the government on foreign policy instead of national policy, Mahathir said this was because Anwar wanted to dodge the issue of NEP.

"If he debates national policy he will have to go against the NEP, which is supported by the majority of the people," he said.

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