

Scrap NEP? I didn't promise that, says Najib
Malaysiakini.com
June 29, 2010

Prime Minister Najib Razak said he did not promise to do away with the affirmative action with regard to helping the Malays and bumiputeras when he introduced the New Economic Model (NEM).

"I did not promise to do away with it. I promised a new approach," he said during an exclusive interview with Singapore-based Channel News Asia (CNA) which was aired in Singapore last night.

Najib said the whole notion of the NEM was to have a fair and balanced society, and this economic model had been practically accepted by all Malaysians.

NONEThe question now was how to get Malaysians there and how do they want to achieve it, he told CNA's Malaysian bureau chief Melissa Goh who conducted the interview in Kuala Lumpur.

The prime minister said: "We want to get there but it has to be through a different route."

Thus, Najib said affirmative action under the NEM would be more market-friendly, more merit based, more transparent and based on needs.

He said there was enough wealth, room and latitude in his country for Malaysians to benefit from the government policies.

Asked when the government would likely stop giving out subsidy, Najib said the government needed to fine tune it first before it could gradually be phased out.

"I use the word gradual because we need the people's buy-in... because subsidy is a very sensitive issue," he said, adding that the government had to convince the Malaysian public that this was good for them in a long term.

"The only problem is that people look very much over the short-term horizon, and they don't look at the long term horizons," Najib said.

'Subsidies-slash depends on public'

The prime minister said the subsidy issue depended a lot on the public buying-in, and also for the government to come up with some social safety nets for those who were poor or vulnerable groups.

"So we are working at it but I did not promise overnight to do away with subsidies," Najib added.

NONEOn the recently warm bilateral relations with Singapore and the settlement on the outstanding Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM, left) land issue, Najib said the KTM land settlement was a major breakthrough as it had been said by some people as "a thorn between our bilateral ties which was left unresolved for almost 20 years."

"I decided that we should put our minds to it and resolve a major outstanding bilateral issue because that will give us a strong foundation," Najib said, adding that it was also a signal to Malaysians as well as Singaporeans that they wanted to move forward, to deepen and to strengthen their existing ties.

The prime minister said: "We should not be emotional, we should not carry the baggage anymore but we should move forward, and with the sense of confidence, we can benefit from this new enthusiasm in terms of bilateral ties."

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/135869>