

Minister target of two-sided attack at student summit
Malaysiakini.com
July 31, 2010

Minister of Trade and Industry Mustapa Mohamed received a less-than-friendly response by participants of the Malaysia Student Leaders Summit in Kuala Lumpur today as he fielded questions from the audience.

A particular answer on the need for a new palace which cost RM811 million provoked so much dissatisfaction that the minister was forced to plead with the students to "be nice".

Mustapa had already gotten off on the wrong foot by starting his answer with "we all need houses, some people need palaces", irritating the audience who were already grumbling about his earlier remark that the government treats all races fairly.

But his subsequent reasoning that the current palace is "too small" did not endear him to the audience of about 600 students from local and foreign universities, who collectively let out a loud groan in protest.

"Don't shout, we are all civil people. I have been very nice to you. I ask you to be nice to me," he implored, adding that those who have been to the current palace would know that the room where the Agong receives his audience is quite small.

mustafa mohamed and tony pua at 2010 student leaders summitIt was a more 'civil' exchange on stage between Mustapa and Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua, who hit a raw nerve by honing in on the apparent lack of political will to remove race-based affirmative action.

Compared to Prime Minister Najib Razak's speech while unveiling the New Economic Model, Pua said, the subsequent 10th Malaysia Plan showed "complete reversal".

"I had applauded him when he unveiled the NEM because this was something that we have been fighting for.

"But then came the Malay Consultative Council, where the PM got a bollocking from (Malay rights NGO Perkasa president Ibrahim Ali) and the PM folded up his speech, spoke off the cuff and said that nothing is finalised," he said.

At the May congress Najib had assured the Malay audience that their interests will continue to be protected, and it was proven when the 10th Malaysia Plan dedicated a whole chapter on bumiputera targets for professional jobs, property and equity.

'Pua jumping the gun'

Mustapa responded by "setting the record straight" that the government is "in general agreement with recommendations (from the NEM report)" and that some had made their way to the 10th Malaysia Plan and the Economic Transformation Plan due in a month's time.

nanyang blogger talk 140507 tony pua"Bumiputera affirmative action will be continued based on the constitution. The approach will be different, no more rent seeking and it will transparent and based on merit," he said.

Pua (right) countered by saying Najib's "scolding" DAP for questioning Malay special rights

after he brought up the issue of bumiputera discounts for luxury property indicates otherwise.

"I agree with the principles of affirmative action, it is not my intention to take away special rights of (bumiputera) as stated in the constitution," he said.

In fact, he said, what he had suggested fitted the term "merit-based, market-based affirmative action".

Mustapa also accused Pua of "jumping the gun, which is not unusual for (him)" when he questioned why the Sungei Buloh and Sungai Besi construction projects were awarded directly to government-linked entities, the Employee Provident Fund and 1Malaysia Sdn Bhd.

Danny quah, tony pua and mustapa mohamed at msls"On the two Sungai (projects), EPF and 1MDB's involvement is only in managing the projects but the implementation will be through bidding," the minister said.

Another speaker was National Economic Advisory Council Danny Quah (far left in photo) who said that the government needs the people's support to make politically risky, but correct, decisions.

"They need to be told that the right thing to do is indeed the right thing to do.

"So reward your leaders in the opposition, government and those among your own organisations for doing the right thing."

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/138857>