

NEM-style resistance not anticipated for ETP
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The Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), due to be launched on Sept 21, is not expected to face as much resistance as the New Economic Model, said Performance Management and Delivery Unit (Pemandu) chief executive officer Idris Jala.

This is because the programme does not deal with "philosophical debates on policy level", but rather it is a detailed plan to fulfill the goals of the New Economic Model (NEM), he said.

"In airline parlance we would say that this is taking it down from 50,000 feet to three feet level. And at this level, there is no argument."

idris jala pemandu subsidies frontimageThe first part of the NEM, released in March, had caused an outcry from groups claiming to represent Malay and bumiputera interests, largely due to the proposal suggesting to do away with race-based affirmative action.

It is understood that the National Economic Advisory Council submitted the final version of the NEM to the prime minister last week.

The minister in the Prime Minister's Department, who was speaking at a media briefing on the programme today in Kuala Lumpur, added that industry experts who contributed to the ETP found no contention on this issue.

"Our labs had Indians, Malays, Chinese, everyone, and there were no affirmative action-type arguments," Idris said.

The ETP is the product of 12 national key economic area (NKEA) labs held in June and July this year, following a townhall discussion with 1000 "movers-and-shakers".

"We called up top companies and organisations to send a total of 500-plus of their best and brightest to work full-time in the labs over a period of eight weeks.

"The objectives of these labs were to find potential projects, find investors and ensure that these projects will deliver higher-paying jobs," he said.

Detailed plans and targets

The outcome was the identification of 131 entry point projects (EPP) which would contribute a total of US\$138 billion to the gross national income, bringing it to US\$523 billion by 2020.

This will push annual per capita income to more than US\$15,000, in line with the NEM target.

azlanBesides this, the labs also spotted 80 business opportunities which could contribute an additional US\$112 billion, while US\$86 billion is expected to come from projects outside of the national key economic areas.

Idris added that 92 percent of the investments for these projects would be derived from the private sector, with 60 percent from non-government linked projects.

He noted that some of the 131 projects are those which were already in the plans even before the labs took place, while the private sector has confirmed commitment for seven of them.

"(Among the reasons) we struggled (with private investment) before was the long approval process. It's like a surgeon wanting to operate on someone but he needs to fill in forms for everything, such that in the end the patient dies.

"What needs to happen now is a fundamental mindset change...We sent big boxes filled with the reports from the labs to each minister to read.

"They probably didn't, but the idea is to show them that this is not a plan but a programme, specific things we want to do with a timelines and targets. We have been long on plans but short on programmes," he said.

Implementation issues, he said, will be dealt with in weekly "problem solving meetings" as tried and tested in the Government Transformation Plan (GTP).

He added that the plan would not derail if some of the 131 projects do not materialise as "there are other projects out there that we still don't know about".

Details of the ETP will be publicly showcased at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur on Sept 21, on Oct 4 at Sheraton Hotel, Kuching and Magellan Sutera Harbour Hotel in Kota Kinabalu on Oct 7.

The public feedback and lab reports will be incorporated into a book, which will be launched on Oct 26.

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