

**Umno quells NEM worries among members**  
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As initial worries about the New Economic Model grew into mounting fear that the plan "will erode Malay rights", Umno elders have been moving to quell anxieties among their own party members.

Teams have been deployed to "explain" the virtues of the NEM to the members, party secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said.

In this third part of an exclusive interview with *Malaysiakini*, he also defended the model, saying it was only a matter of time before it became universally accepted by Umno's three million members.

It is no secret that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has been battling hardline Malay sentiments over his brainchild.

As an economic plan to replace the New Economic Policy, which is aimed at liberalising the country's market and turning Malaysia into a high-income nation, much will have to be changed about the way business is done in the country.

And one of these changes is to review the current affirmative action policies.

But Tengku Adnan (*right*), a former tourism minister, said the fears of the party members were "nothing that a good communications plan can't cure".

He added: "They don't understand. They should look at NEM thoroughly.

"I believe that once the explanation has been done properly, the (Umno) members will definitely accept NEM because it is a good model for growth, for the future and for the citizens of this country.

"Sometimes, people tended to be complacent, fearing change.

"We've already got a team explaining to them. But sometimes, it's just human nature. If you're used to whatever you were before, you would tend to be complacent.

"So, we have a team to go down to explain to them," he said in his office at the Umno headquarters in Menara Dato Onn.

'Najib PM of Malaysia, not of Malays alone'

Asked about the perception that Premier Najib's relative openness with the non-Malay races has been causing uneasiness among his own party members, Tengku Adnan dismissed this as mere "perception".





"We're talking about perception. Who is saying this? Umno leaders are not saying it. Najib (*left*) is the prime minister of Malaysia you know, not the PM of the Malays, or the PM of Umno," he said.

Pressed further, and asked about fears expressed that the NEM would erode the special rights of the Malays, he dismissed the grumbling of some Umno members as that of "discontented" people.

"Who are they? Who is saying that? This is your perception, *lah*. These are discontented people, people who think they might lose whatever they have.

"They think that it's easy now; that with the NEM, it won't be easy... but you have to change, *lah*. When they realise it's good, they'll accept it," he said.

Since the plan was announced in March, it has drawn the ire of several Malay rights NGOs, which have expressed much fear that the NEM will erode the protection of the Malays as enshrined in the federal constitution.