

**NEP poster boy hits back at criticism**  
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**Fauwaz Abdul Aziz**

Far from 'forgetting' his debt to the New Economic Policy (NEP) - as his detractors have accused him of doing - Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim said his state government seeks a return to the policy's original spirit. MCPX

That spirit, he said, is of an affirmative action for all and which does not discriminate between the various races in Malaysia or among the Malays as Umno's implementation of the NEP had done.

khalid ibrahim selangor menteri besar pc 170308 01 "The NEP after it was introduced ... catered for everybody. In subsequent years, because of political demands, it was used to discriminate not only against (people of) other races but against persons even within the (Malay) community.

"Only the selected few within Umno and their agents benefitted from it. My contention is, if this is the way it's going to be done, we better not do it at all.

"We might as well go back to the basics: the idea of an affirmative action plan to provide opportunities to (all) those in need of opportunities," he told a press conference at his official residence in Shah Alam.

Khalid, 61, who is PKR secretary-general, was responding to criticisms voiced by Umno leaders after he was reported as having called for the abolition of the NEP.

Among them, Umno information chief Muhammad Muhd Taib said Khalid had "forgotten" that he himself had implemented the NEP when he headed state investment firm Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB) and unit trust scheme Amanah Saham Nasional (ASN).

Through PNB and ASN, the NEP had given Malays the opportunity to attain an equal standing with the other races, said Muhammad according to a report in Malay-language Mingguan Malaysia.

"(Khalid) says the NEP did not give any benefits to Malays, but hasn't the policy raised Malays above the poverty line through educational and economic activities and so on?" Muhammad was quoted as saying.

"I wonder how he can forget and issue such statements (against the NEP) whereas he was among those who planned and implemented development programmes under this policy."

Khalid was to move on to become chief executive officer of plantation giant Guthrie, a government-linked company.

### **His debt of gratitude**

Meanwhile, former Umno secretary-general Sabaruddin Chik suggested that Khalid - considered a poster boy of NEP - had forgotten his debt of gratitude to the policy.

"Abdul Khalid is himself a product of the NEP. If it were not for the (NEP), he would not be in the position he is in today and living comfortably," said Sabaruddin.

Denying the accusations today, Khalid said he was thankful for the opportunities given to him by the NEP. While helming PNB and ASN, Khalid said he had implemented the policy in a fair manner.

"After (I left), the policy was not implemented in an inclusive manner but selectively. That selectiveness is what leads me to propose that it not be used," he said.

Khalid said the policy has been abused to provide opportunities to a few people within Umno to enrich themselves as well as those well-connected individuals outside the party.

"I'm quite sure that a lot of Malays are in need of these opportunities. A number of Chinese are also in need of such opportunities. We have Indians also who ... want to be part of the mainstream of the economic activities," he said.

Khalid also said Selangor and Kuala Lumpur as the financial, commercial, and administrative hubs of the country are rich enough to benefit everyone.

"This is not a zero-sum game in the sense that if I help the Malays, I cannot help the Chinese or the Indians. Selangor has all the resources for everybody's needs. Why are we squabbling about who should get (what) when everyone who is in need can enjoy (their share)?" he said.

Khalid argued that to enable this, the state government must be run "effectively, efficiently and free of corruption and abuse of power".

"Only then can you distribute it all (equitably). The state cannot afford to do (otherwise)," he said.

### **Scare tactics from Umno**

Also present at the press conference was PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, who urged the public not to be taken in by Umno leaders' 'scare tactics' and stoking of racial tensions.

Such leaders are only fearful of losing their vested interests due to the scrapping of the NEP in those states controlled by PKR, DAP and PAS, he claimed.

khalid ibrahim selangor menteri besar pc 170308 013 "This climate of fear and insecurity is only deployed to cater to the interest of the few," said Anwar.

He also said the NEP was not in line with the aspirations of most people who believe in the provision of opportunities to everyone in need regardless of race.

"The NEP is obsolete. We have crafted a new Malaysian Economic Agenda," he said, referring to the new 'fair to all' policy mooted by his party.

"We must allow for Malays, Chinese, and Indians to feel that they are all part and parcel of this society," he added.

Khalid and Anwar later visited Rimba Jaya in Shah Alam - a low-income community made

up predominantly of Malays and Indians - which they claimed is testimony to the 'failure' of the NEP.

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