

'Innovative' Najib told to end NEP
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak should end the 50-year-old New Economic Policy if he wants to lay claim to innovation or shift to a new economic model, said opposition stalwart Lim Kit Siang.

The veteran DAP leader noted that the NEP had stunted Malaysia's economic growth and prevented the nation from becoming a high-income country.

"Ad hoc and half-hearted measures tinkering with the NEP will not take an innovation economy very far," he said in a statement responding to the Budget 2010 unveiled by Najib on Friday.

Lim also cited two examples from the premier's list of budgetary proposals: These were:

- 1) RM10,000 for each approved permit (AP) to open AP holders from 2010, with a portion of this collection to be channeled to the bumiputra development fund in the automotive sector.
- 2) Award national scholarships to 30 '*crème de la crème*' students strictly on merit for educational studies in world renowned universities.

Lim said if the Najib government believes in accountability, transparency and integrity, all APs should be put up for open tender.

As for the national scholarships, the Ipoh Timor MP said: "This is a paltry and most ridiculous figure."

He said in March, the then minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Bernard Dompok announced that out of 2,000 Public Services Department scholarship scheme for foreign degrees, 20 percent or 400 scholarships would be for excellent students, 60 percent or 1,200 scholarships for bumiputera and non-bumiputera SPM leavers; 10 percent for 200 scholarships for Sabah and Sarawak bumiputera SPM leavers; the remaining 10 percent for disabled students who excelled in their studies.

"What is another 30 when 400 of the 2,000 PSD scholarships are already meant for the '*creme da la crème*' – or has the Barisan Nasional government again been misleading the people about the award of the 400 PSD scholarships based on 'merit'?" he asked.

'Branding innovation'

Criticising Najib's emphasis on innovation during his budget speech, Lim said the premier's most successful innovation in his first 200 days at the helm is 'branding innovation'.

"Never before has a prime minister's slogan, '1Malaysia', been promoted so blatantly, not only during by-elections but there is even a 1Malaysia Toilet in Terengganu, putting the previous prime minister's slogan of 'Islam Hadhari' to shame.

"All thanks to the tens of millions of ringgit spent on public relations companies, in particular the US-based Apco Worldwide PR firm to promote the new Najib brand at public expense," he said.

As for 'innovation' in other important sectors of national life, Lim said, the new prime

minister has got very little to show.

"Najib said the focus of his budget will be on the well-being of the rakyat, with particular emphasis on advancing the role of the private sector as the driver of economic growth and developing high-skilled human capital and enhancing the efficiency of the public service.

"This is nothing new as it is said in every budget speech in Parliament as far as I can remember.

"But they have not been able to stop the significant decline of private investment to below 10 percent of GDP, with total domestic direct investment decreasing from RM72 billion in 1997 to RM56 billion in 2008, while total net foreign direct investment (FDI) plunged from RM19.7 billion to RM3.6 billion," he added.

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