

Don't let NEM be another NEP: Pua
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The New Economic Model (NEM) should not emulate the shortcomings of the 1970s' New Economic Policy (NEP), said Petaling Jaya Utara DAP parliamentarian Tony Pua.

NONERebuking the NEP, an affirmative action policy introduced by second Prime Minister Abdul Razak Hussein, Pua (right) said it has proven to be a "complete failure over the past 20 years".

Citing government data, Pua said NEP's aim of achieving 30 percent Bumiputera equity had failed as the equity ownership has remained at 19.4 percent in 2006, compared to 19.2 percent in 1990, after reaching the zenith of 20.6 percent in 1995.

According to Pua, the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) road map had highlighted several negative effects of the NEP, such as the sense of deprivation, discrimination and resentment felt by non-bumiputeras.

Within the bumiputera community, on the other hand, the income gap has widened, leading to rising discontent among bumiputeras themselves, Pua added.

The combination of both factors have pushed many Malaysians, especially professionals, to seek work and residence overseas in the developed countries, said Pua, who is DAP national publicity secretary.

"These are clear admissions by the government that, despite the initial success of the policy during the 1970s 1980s, the NEP has failed over the past 20 years, and there is an absolute need for a new economic model as proposed by (Prime Minister) Najib Abdul Razak," Pua told a press conference in the Parliament lobby today.

He said Pakatan Rakyat and DAP have been pushing for a new economic agenda founded on "merit and competition" rather than the NEP's race-based affirmative action policy.

Policy to raise problems

While welcoming the government's belated recognition of the problems, Pua said the "perpetual delays" in the announcement of the NEM since last year has raised concerns as to whether it will really transform and "raise Malaysia out of the doldrums".

He also asked whether pressure by "race-based" interest groups like Perkasa and the Malay Consultative Council had caused the government to "waver in its original goals of NEM".

Pua cited the statement of Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Mukhriz Mahathir that the NEM would retain the "spirit" of the NEP.

"Many other ministers have issued vague and conflicting statement on NEM, causing further confusion," said Pua.

He reiterated that the best policy to revive Malaysia's fortunes and to uplift the poor is to make decisions based on "merit and competition".

"We believe that any affirmative action policies based on race, such as the NEP, will only result in the wealthy and more influential of that particular community to gain from such policies, while the vast majority of the community would not benefit proportionally, as proven by NEP's failure over the past 20 years," he said.

Pua urged the prime minister not to allow his landmark economic policy to be "derailed into meaningless oblivion by becoming... the extension of the NEP," as occurred with the National Development Plan and the National Vision Policy that were meant to replace the NEP, said Pua.

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