

Kit Siang Dares DPM To Table NEM To Parliament For Adoption
Malaysianmirror.com
February 10, 2011

Kuala Lumpur – DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang dared Deputy Prime Minister to present the New Economic Policy (NEM) to Parliament next month for formal adoption, if his denial that the NEM had not been 'watered down' is to have any credibility.

The debacle erupted when National Economic Advisory Council (NEAC) member Dr. Zainal Aznam Mohd Yusof revealed that the NEM had been "watered down" due to pressure by right wing groups such as Perkasa.

The DPM had earlier insisted that the NEM had not been 'watered down'. He was quoted as saying that "what had been planned by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, including all the steps taken to achieve a developed and high income country by 2020, is still very much intact."

"The issue (of being watered down) does not arise. We took (into consideration) all components of society, be it bumiputera or non-bumiputera," Muhyiddin was reported to have said after after delivering the 2011 Education Minister's Special Message at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

The NEM was unveiled with much fanfare by the Prime Minister Najib Razak on 30th March last year promised to do away with government crutches by pursuing eight Strategic Reform Initiative (SRI), particularly the one that seeks to promote "transparent and market-friendly affirmative action".

Lim quoted Chapter 6 of NEM, page 117 which read, "existing affirmative action programme and institutions will continue in NEM but, in line with views of the main stakeholders, will be revamped to remove the rent seeking and market distorting features which have blemished the effectiveness of the programme. Affirmative action will consider all ethnic groups fairly and equally as long as they are in the low income 40% of the households. Affirmative action programmes would be based on market-friendly and market-based criteria together taking into consideration the need and merits of the applicants. An Equal Opportunities Commission will be established to ensure fairness and address undue discrimination when occasional abuses by dominant groups are encountered."

There was also a clear admission on the part of NEM that 'the excessive focus on ethnicity-based distribution of resources has contributed to growing separateness and dissension'.

However, Lim agreed with Dr. Zainal Aznam that there were considerable back-peddalling on the NEM, when the 10th Malaysia Plan was presented in June, as a result of considerable pressure from right wing groups which the former claimed were "making baseless and incendiary claims such as that the Malays are under siege and that the Chinese would take over the economy and country."

"As a result, instead of the first policy operationalisation of the NEM, the Tenth Malaysia Plan is a funeral requiem for the NEM", claimed Lim.

"The NEM had warned of the dire consequences of failure of political will and leadership to carry out far-reaching national political, economic, social and government transformation. It rightly identified the most important enablers of the NEM are political will and leadership to break the log-jam of resistance by vested interest groups and preparing the rakyat to support deep-seated changes in policy directions."

Lim claimed he had urged the government to take prompt action when resistance is encountered and stay the course but the urgings have come to a nought with the "watering down" of the NEM.

"Lets put Muhyiddin to the test when he denied any "watering down" of the NEM? Is he prepared to support the tabling of the NEM to Parliament when it reconvenes for a month from 7th March for MPs to adopt and endorse the NEM without any "watering down"?" dared the fiery opposition leader.

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