

NEP was not designed to create Malay capitalists, says Ku Li
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By Leslie Lau

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 — The New Economic Policy (NEP) was never meant to create an incubated class of Malay capitalists, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, the former Umno finance minister and veteran party leader, said today.

He also appeared to take a swipe at Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin when he said “we have a leader who openly transgresses” the 1 Malaysia policy by declaring himself Malay first.

Tengku Razaleigh, or popularly known as Ku Li, made the remarks in his speech entitled “A Plea For Unity” at a “Breakfast Meeting” forum organised by Paddy Schubert Sdn Bhd this morning.

His speech appeared in part to be a warning to the Najib administration against emulating his old political rival Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad’s policies.

Ku Li is known to be one of the greatest critics of the NEP and Dr Mahathir’s handling of the policy.

Last week, Tengku Razaleigh charged that years of political patronage and the long-standing system of co-dependency between business and politics arising from the Mahathir era had led to neglect of the people’s “real socio-economic problems”.

The outspoken veteran Umno leader said that economic policies of the past, which kicked off from the 1980s onwards, had also widened inequality in Malaysia and would worsen if the present administration does not move to separate business from politics.

In his speech this morning, he stuck to the same theme.

“The New Economic Policy, which was conceived in 1971 not long after the Tunku had retired as prime minister, was primarily created to address poverty, and to raise the level of Malay participation in the economy. It was intended for all Malaysians, and not just for the Malays or Bumiputeras.

“As a former finance minister, let me emphasise that it was never the intention of the NEP to create an incubated class of Malay capitalists,” Tengku Razaleigh.

In recent weeks, Dr Mahathir’s policies have been the subject of scrutiny, after the Najib administration decided to settle out of court the debt owed by former Malaysia Airline System Bhd (MAS) chief Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli.

The settlement sum was undisclosed, prompting intense public criticism and attacks from the opposition over the right of taxpayers to know how much of public funds had been recovered.

Tajudin, 65, had served as the airline’s executive chairman from 1994 to 2001 and was a poster boy of former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin’s now-discredited policy of nurturing a class of Malay corporate captains on government largesse during the Mahathir

administration.

In his speech this morning, Ku Li also pointed out that the NEP had become a major source of disunity.

"If we visit government departments or universities, we wonder where all the non-Malays have gone. After 1969, suddenly there was this attempt to recruit mostly Malays into the civil service.

"It is tragic that the civil service does not reflect the racial composition of the Malaysian population, as the predominant presence of only one race tends to engender a sub-culture that is antithetical to the evolution of a dynamic and efficient civil administration in the country."

While he did not name Muhyiddin, Tengku Razaleigh appeared to single out the deputy prime minister for symbolising a disdain for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's 1 Malaysia doctrine.

"We have an official document that explains the 1 Malaysia concept as a nation where every Malaysian perceives himself as Malaysian first, and by race second.

"However, we have a leader who openly transgresses his own official policy by declaring that he is 'Malay first' and 'Malaysian second'."

Ku Li pointed out that the statement was a severe blow not just to the concept of 1 Malaysia, but also a nullification of Jiwa Malaysia or the National Spirit that Tunku was trying hard to inculcate.

The veteran politician, who once challenged Dr Mahathir for the presidency of Umno but lost narrowly, said many people now did not feel as though they were fully Malaysian.

"It is strange that after 55 years of freedom, we have not learnt the simple art of living together as brothers and sisters.

"The country's source of strength is unity, and this source of strength has been slowly whittled away over the years. We have become a nation of strangers, as evidenced in the fields of politics, the economy, education and the civil service."

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