

Pakatan MPs back Ku Li's views on NEP abuse
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 — The abuse of the New Economic Policy (NEP) has worsened the economic imbalance between poor Malays and other races, Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers said today.

Opposition leaders say the NEP, which was intended to raise the participation of Bumiputeras in all economic sectors, had instead nurtured and cultivated "instant millionaires" and politically-connected businessmen aligned to former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed.

PR lawmakers who spoke to The Malaysian Insider agreed with the remarks made by former finance minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who said this morning the NEP was never meant to create an incubated class of Malay capitalists but to address poverty and to raise the level of Malay participation in the economy.

Liew said the NEP only benefitted people such as Syed Mokhtar.
"The bottom 40 per cent of the nation earns a monthly household income of RM1,500 per month, 73 per cent of which are Bumiputera-Malays," DAP international secretary Liew Chin Tong told The Malaysian Insider.

"The NEP was to help Malays who are disadvantaged... but the government is not doing that. Decades after the NEP, the majority of the poor in this country are still Malays and we should make it a point to help the bottom 40 per cent."

The Bukit Bendera MP said the purpose of the NEP was to correct inequalities, but the government had used that as a pretext to enrich individuals who are already well-off.

He said the government should provide better public services — housing, healthcare, public transportation and education — for the bottom 40 per cent so that they will better equipped with skills, which will in turn allow them to gain more disposable income,.

"The Malays and Chinese can all see through it. The NEP is not there to help the poor Malays. I don't think anyone has a problem if we want to help the bottom 40 per cent.

"You're only helping (Tan Sri) Syed Mokhtar (Al-Bukhary) and people who are in Syed Mokhtar's league... The Malays can see the flaw in this as well," said Liew, referring to the media-shy tycoon.

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar said Tengku Razaleigh's remarks reaffirmed the dissatisfaction and inequality felt by many Malaysians for years, and that this has "driven so many out of this beloved country of ours."

"The sense of inequality, so clearly spelled out by the World Bank's Brain Drain report, is seemingly not reaching the [Barisan Nasional] top echelon, including the prime minister himself.

"Malaysians are held hostage to a past that benefits the few to the detriment of all Malaysians. Umno-BN has forfeited to govern legitimately through illegitimate means and false promises," said the Lembah Pantai MP.

Selangor PAS deputy commissioner Khalid Samad said he "fully agreed" with Tengku Razaleigh's views, adding that NEP was supposed to address economic disparity, but did the exact opposite.

"It was not supposed to create instant millionaires. Dr Mahathir short-circuited the process of the NEP and created millionaires who were his cronies," he said.

Dr Mahathir has defended his administration's implementation of the NEP, saying the different races were represented at all levels of the economic ladder.

Tengku Razaleigh earlier said the NEP has failed to help the poor Bumiputeras. He said that when he was prime minister from 1981 to 2003, "other races also became millionaires and billionaires," pointing to the likes of Berjaya's recently-retired chairman Tan Sri Vincent Tan, Hong Kong-based Robert Kuok and communications magnate T. Ananda Krishnan.

Dr Mahathir, who remains highly influential in Umno, said he had not chosen winners but those who got rich under his government did so because "they had the capacity."

In recent weeks, the ex-PM'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.

Dr Mahathir also defended today the government's move to buy back the national carrier at RM8 per share in 2001, more than twice the market value at the time, as "we had to turn the company around."

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