

Vague apology doesn't wipe slate clean, Kit Siang tells Najib
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By Melissa Chi

KUALA LUMPUR, March 4 — DAP leader Lim Kit Siang challenged Datuk Seri Najib Razak today to list his Barisan Nasional (BN) government's mistakes to prove that his apology was not a "blank cheque" for the transgressions of previous administrations.

"Is Najib apologising for [Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's] 22-year premiership [that] was dogged by a catalogue of financial scandals costing an estimated loss of RM100 billion to the country?"

"Up to now, Malaysians are still paying for these financial scandals, as in the third and latest RM840 million bailout of former Malaysia Airlines (MAS) chairman Tajudin Ramli with his out-of-court settlement with Danaharta and GLCs (government-linked companies)," the veteran opposition lawmaker said in a statement.

Lim said the prime minister should be given an opportunity to enumerate the past BN mistakes for which he is extending an apology and promise not to repeat them, so that Malaysians can decide whether Najib's admission was sincere or otherwise.

The Ipoh Timor MP said Najib's apology should be accepted if it is genuine, but added that it could be "just election gimmickry".

Najib, who is chairman of the 13-member ruling coalition, apologised yesterday for BN's past mistakes that caused it to lose its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament and four states in 2008.

The apology appeared to be recognition of the groundswell against the ruling coalition ahead of a general election that must be held by next year.

"I believe that we should not be arrogant. In a parliamentary democracy, we have to subject ourselves to the power of the people. We must have made mistakes for the people to have rejected us.

"We apologise for our past mistakes. The victors apologise, as do the losers," he said at a meet-the-people session at the Kuala Ketil public field, Baling, according to a Bernama Online report.

The prime minister said the BN would rectify the mistakes and make up by serving the people as best as it can.

The voters' rejection of the BN, like in Kedah, was in a way due to the mistakes made by the coalition, Najib said during a day-long visit to the state.

Earlier today, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said although the prime minister admitted that BN made mistakes, "there is no need to list out our weaknesses; that

is in the past”.

“What is more important is in front, in the next 10, 20 years and as the prime minister said, we are ready to improve ourselves and improve on what we have already accomplished such as the national transformation programmes, which includes the economy, government, politics, rural issues and new measures taken by the prime minister and the government, which have an effective impact,” Najib’s deputy told reporters after the launch of the World Kidney Day at Dataran Merdeka.

Today, Lim said one should ask whether Najib has issued a “blank cheque” apology, “signifying nothing as to enable all the past BN mistakes of abuses of power, corruption and lack of accountability to be repeated in even worse magnitude”.

“In the past three decades, the independence, impartiality, integrity and professionalism of major national institutions, whether civil service, judiciary, police, elections commission or anti-corruption agency, were seriously compromised by executive interference and usurpation,” he said.

Lim pointed out the “abysmal failure” in the fight against corruption under the 1 Malaysia Government Transformation Programme (GTP), noting the score for the corruption perception index (CPI) has plunged to a lowest-ever 4.3 and the worst ranking so far of No. 60 in the 2011 Transparency International CPI.

The DAP advisor asked if Najib was apologising for Malaysia becoming “increasingly corrupt” under the administration of the fourth and fifth prime ministers, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tun Abdullah Badawi respectively.

He also demanded if Najib will apologise for the “illegal power grab” in Perak, which saw the elected Pakatan Rakyat (PR) state government headed by Datuk Seri Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin being ousted from office after several state lawmakers jumped ship 11 months into its mandate.

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