

**Dr M defends NEP, says most Bumis have benefitted**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Yow Hong Chieh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 25 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad defended the New Economic Policy (NEP) as the source of “almost all” Bumiputera successes and hit out at critics of the controversial affirmative action programme for making politically-motivated attacks.

In a blog post today, the former prime minister conceded the presence of corruption, but rejected as baseless the claim by opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim that the NEP only profited Umno cronies. Dr Mahathir said far too many Malays and Bumiputeras at all levels benefited from the NEP.

“There may be corruption but the NEP would not have succeeded to the extent shown if corruption prevails in every case. The focus on cronyism and corruption is political, not based on the real role and achievements of the NEP,” he said on his popular Chedet blog.

He cited the rise of a sizable Malay professional class, narrowed income gap between Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras across the board and success of top Bumiputera businesses which have grown “very big” as proof that the Bumiputera community as a whole — and not just a few cronies — had benefited from the NEP.

The veteran Umno politician admitted that some of those who reaped the benefits from nearly two decades of pro-Bumiputera policies were known to government leaders but said this was to be expected as “government leaders in Malaysia are accessible to everyone as a matter of policy”.

“They may be Umno members. But then there are more than 3 million Umno members. Is the government expected to exclude them from the benefits of the NEP?” he said.

“The fact is that almost all of those who have succeeded have benefited from the NEP. Those who show capability cannot be excluded from the support under the NEP. In fact, it is safer to help those with good records than to give to untried people.”

Dr Mahathir, who oversaw the transformation of the country from an agricultural producer to a manufacturing powerhouse during his 22-year tenure, also said it was sad that Malays who owed “a debt of gratitude” to the NEP were now calling for it to be scrapped.

He added that non-Bumiputeras too have gained from the programme as they enjoyed the spin-offs from contracts given to Bumiputeras who still needed the non-Bumiputeras to undertake specialised work “as there are hardly any Bumiputera sub-contractors capable of doing this”.

A substantial part of the projects during the NEP period went to non-Bumiputeras, he said, but alleged that if the tables were turned Bumiputeras would not get any work from non-Bumiputera contractors as the latter had no need for them.

“The result must be increasing disparities in wealth between Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera as the economy grows. The dichotomy already seen in our Malaysian society will become worse when this happens,” he said.

"Politicians must find issues to support their bids for power. But condemning the NEP can only be done by twisting or ignoring the contributions of that policy to political stability and the economic success of Malaysia."

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