

Putrajaya's race-based policies not the only reason for brain drain, say BN leaders Malaysian Insider

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Barisan Nasional leaders, responding to former Singapore prime minister Lee Kuan Yew's remarks in his new book that Malaysia's acute loss of talent was due to Putrajaya's race-based policies, said there were also "pull factors" to the country's brain drain.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek said Singapore's higher wages and better infrastructure were pull factors.

Lee, in his book, "One Man's View Of The World", said "40% of our migrants are from Malaysia".

"People look for better pay, better infrastructure. In Singapore, you can travel without a car," Chua said at the Cabinet open house in Putrajaya today.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapha Mohamed, however, agreed there was some truth in Lee's allegation.

"I admit some have left the country because of that but it is not the only reason," he said, adding that the government had to find ways to address the socio-economic imbalance to ensure no one race felt left out of the country's development.

Mustapha noted the Indian community has asked the government to bring back the quota system for university placement as it felt the current merit-based system was a disadvantage to its children vying for places in public universities.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahidi Hamid said Lee's view was "outdated" but declined to elaborate.

MCA deputy president Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said in the past, the issue of Ketuanan Melayu had prompted some to leave.

"I will admit that the issue of Ketuanan Melayu has caused some migration but we want to emphasise that Malaysia is a multiracial country and we preserve harmony and unity," he said.

In his book, Lee was scathing in his comments on the Malaysian leadership. In a chapter in the 400-page volume, Lee said that unlike Singapore, Malaysia is prepared to lose homegrown talent to keep one race dominant.

This despite what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said in parliament here in 2011 that the government would set up a unit to entice back some 700,000 Malaysians working abroad.

Lee's own view is that the demographic changes in Malaysia will lead to a further entrenchment of Malay privileges and that this was more important to Malaysia than retaining talent.

He wrote that in the last 10 years, since the enactment of the New Economic Policy, the

proportion of Malaysian Chinese and Indians to the total population has fallen dramatically.

Giving figures in his book, he said, "The Chinese made up 35.6 percent of the population in 1970. They were down to 24.6 percent at the last census in 2010. Over that same period, the Indian numbers fell from 10.8 percent to 7.3 percent."

On how Singapore had benefited, he added, "40 percent of our migrants are from Malaysia."

Meanwhile, Mustapha, commenting on former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's new book, "Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia", asserted that "there were two sides to a coin".

In the book, Abdullah said if he had given in to the pressure from former predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to continue with his pet mega-projects, Malaysia would be bankrupt by now.

Abdullah also said when he left office in 2009, he was determined not to be like Mahathir. He explained that he wanted Najib to establish himself as the prime minister.

"Everyone is entitled to his views. In the end, the government has to decide what's best for the country, weighing the benefits and cost. It is a question of judgment," said Mustapha.

On Abdullah's statement that Umno-controlled Utusan Malaysia has gone out of control, Mustapha said press freedom in the country was not only for Utusan but for social media as well.

"No good talking about control... we cannot exercise full control," he said. - August 8, 2013.

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