

Umno leaders defend race-based policies, say Malays still need help

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Several Umno leaders have defended the government's race-based policies saying the Malays were still in need of help.

Umno supreme council member Datuk Seri Noh Omar (pic) said the government is on the right track with its race-based policies as Malays were still lagging behind the country's other races.

He said this was despite affirmative measures introduced under the New Economic Policy to address economic and social inequity in the early 1970s.

"The 1969 racial riot was caused by the imbalance in economy among races and therefore, the Malays must be given the edge to compete, to ensure there is a level-playing field," said the former Agriculture Minister today.

He was commenting on former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's latest book, "One Man's View of the World" where he said Putrajaya's race-based policies had seen Malaysia suffer a critical brain drain problem.

"They are prepared to lose that talent in order to maintain the dominance of one race," an excerpt of Lee's book read.

He noted that Singapore had benefited, as "40 per cent of our migrants are from Malaysia."

Noh said the Malays were still in need of help in the field of education.

"Therefore the current system put in place pertaining to education policies especially, has to be continued," the Tanjung Karang MP told The Malaysian Insider.

Noh said Lee's comparison of Malaysia with Singapore's success was flawed as "the republic has an entirely differing socio-economic landscape unlike Malaysia."

Jerlun MP Datuk Othman Aziz said the government's policy is to only "balance the expertise of other races".

"This is so that the Malays can stand on an equal pedestal with the other races in the country in terms of competition," Othman said.

He added that it was natural for Malaysians looking for better opportunities to move abroad but it did not mean the country was doomed in terms of talent.

"If the local expertise serving overseas are reluctant to come back home, those who are already in the country can make up for local needs.

"Anyone would be interested in job opportunities which can guarantee lucrative paycheques, whether or not it is abroad or in Malaysia," he noted.

However, Federal Territories minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said Lee was

being unfair in his comments as the government was making amends.

"We are trying to rectify the earlier mistakes which have led to the problem of talents going out of Malaysia," he said at the Cabinet's Hari Raya open house in Putrajaya yesterday.

Addressing the brain drain problem, Putrajaya had set up the TalentCorp agency in 2011 to entice back some 700,000 Malaysians from abroad.

"No government in the world is perfect for that matter. The Malaysian government is not perfect but so is Singapore," the Umno secretary-general said, adding that he hopes to see a change as well.

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.

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." – August 9, 2013.

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