

LETTERS

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Time is not on our side

DATUK Mukhriz Mahathir's views on "Making it just for all" (NST, May 30), challenges us all to think through his serious concerns on the economy. His thoughts are sensitive, controversial but necessary since I think he honestly reflects his hidden anxieties. They therefore merit our deep consideration as it touches on as he says "the vital cogs in the system". Unless we address these issues squarely, we may indeed be unjust to all.

Mukhriz responds to Shaun Tan's essay on the Brain Drain, in the World Bank 2011 Essay Competition. I shall therefore comment on Mukhriz's views as follows.

He states that "the basic tenet of our nation is split according to a 70:30 ratio, with 30% being affirmative action, under the NEP to eradicate poverty regardless of race.

This is, with respect, a sad misconception of the NEP as I can recall from its original intentions. The 30% refers to the second prong of the NEP - which is to do with restructuring the equity ownership in the economy and not the poverty issue on the basis of race.

Furthermore, it is not correct that "70% of the economy is not affected by the NEP type policies". In fact, the 30% equity ownership requirement has permeated right through the economy for the last 40 years and still continues in various forms. This bumiputra equity requirement is even

much higher for contracts with Petronas and several GLCs. This is one reason foreign and domestic investments have been declining in our country. We need to rectify this problem as postulated in the New Economic Model. But the NEM will be undermined if we stick to the outdated ways in our thinking and implementation.

It is useful to know what Mukhriz means when he says that it "pains him to see structural discrimination being practised by those in the private sector"? The private sector unlike the government sector, has to compete to survive and to make profits for its shareholders or perish. Hence how can it afford to discriminate against good talent and quality and capability to manufacture, innovate and market its goods and services to the world? It cannot be expected to do charity when merit and results are required to survive and to sustain itself. The government on the other hand has sacrificed much on merit and that is why we are losing out to our international competitors and giving opportunities for greater corruption and wastage of taxpayers' funds.

Mukhriz says that there is a commitment to "tackling issues one by one and that the results may be slow". But I appeal to Mukhriz and all those who share his considered views, to appreciate that time is not on our side. We need to deal with our many weaknesses across the board and not tally too long. If we do we will not realise the goals of the NEM, Malaysia and Vision 2020 on time, then that can be "unjust to all Malaysians".

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