

Anti-Umno group says Najib banner incident due to academic interference
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 21 — A youth group said today the lowering of a banner with Datuk Seri Najib Razak's face last Saturday would not have happened without Umno's stifling of academic freedom.

Solidariti Anak Muda Malaysia (SAMM), which recently banded with other NGOs and political parties to launch the Anything But Umno/BN (ABU) movement, said today the incident was likely a result of "the youth's loathing" for the prime minister.

"The demonstration on December 17 was to call for academic freedom. If the Umno regime did not interfere and academic freedom existed, the demonstration would not have happened.

"Of the six flagpoles, the reason why the students lowered Najib Razak's banner must be seen as a likely manifestation of the youth's loathing for Najib," said SAMM leader Badrul Hisham Shahrin.

Badrul, who is also a PKR grassroots leader, said SAMM fully backed Adam Adli Abdul Halim, the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris student, who lowered Najib's banner in front of Umno's headquarters to raise an "Academic Freedom" flag.

About 100 student activists had marched to the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) on Saturday to hand over a six-point memorandum on academic freedom to Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah.

Adam, 22, had lowered and then raised a flag-shaped banner of Umno president Najib, immediately drawing criticism from the public and several government officials.

But close to 17,000 people have so far backed a Facebook campaign called "We Are All Adam Adli" supporting the student activist, more than double the 7,000 yesterday morning.

Saifuddin has said the government remains committed to amend the UUCA to provide for greater academic freedom despite the incident.

The Temerloh MP is among several from the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) who have backed a proposal to amend the university law for greater academic freedom.

He said the committee to amend the UUCA would begin work shortly and expects the government would be ready to present the revised law in Parliament next year.