

Student group backs Najib, demands Saifuddin quit over banner incident
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PUTRAJAYA, Dec 21 — Nearly 200 undergraduates pledged their support to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today while calling for Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah to step down and take responsibility over last Saturday's "banner incident".

Calling themselves the Aspirasi Undergraduate Leaders' Alumni Society (Aspirasi), the students from public universities nationwide thronged the compound of the Higher Education Ministry here to show support to Najib and push for Saifuddin to quit both his government and party posts.

Saifuddin is the deputy minister in the High Education Ministry and a member of the powerful supreme council in Umno, the ruling Barisan Nasional's lynchpin party.

"We must prove we are undergraduates who support government policies. We are undergraduates who love the country. Undergraduates are not the opposition's tools," Aspirasi president Mohd Shahar Abdullah said as he pushed for campus grounds that are both safe and free from dirty politics.

The undergraduates were reacting to Saifuddin's actions in the wake of a street protest last Saturday outside the Umno headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, during which a supporter of student movements, Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia (SMM) and the Movement for Academic Freedom (Bebas), had lowered from a flagpole a banner bearing Najib's likeness before raising it again.

Today, Aspirasi members carried placards with messages such as "We love PM", "Datuk Najib is the best PM" and "Saifuddin should quit".

They also handed over two memoranda to express support to the Najib administration and to urge Saifuddin to resign his posts as the Higher Education deputy minister and his seat in the Umno Supreme Council within 14 days.

Shahar said Saifuddin should be held accountable for the incident that is seen to have sullied the prime minister's dignity.

The Higher Education Minister's political secretary, Khairy Mohamed, and the deputy minister's senior private secretary, Mohd Nazri Noh, accepted the memoranda.

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