

PAGE warns BN of polls backlash from PPSMI snub
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 — Barisan Nasional (BN) risks losing votes in upcoming polls if it continues barring students from learning science and maths using English in schools, a parents lobby group said today.

The Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE) wants the 10-year-old policy of teaching science and maths in English at national schools (PPSMI) to be made an option for students in primary and secondary schools.

"If it is political (decision on PPSMI) give us the PPSMI option in national primary and secondary schools, and we will give you the two-thirds majority, which you are making increasingly difficult for us to do.

"Do not make us give the opposition our vote," said PAGE chairman Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim said in a statement to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today.

"We would not like the Najib administration to be remembered for abolishing PPSMI, for not regaining the two-thirds majority and for making our children yet another lost generation," she said bluntly.

Noor Azimah stressed that the government's past decision in introducing PPSMI in schools was not "flawed", adding it would empower students with the skills and knowledge needed to compete with other countries should the policy be retained.

She criticised Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin for saying yesterday that the education system will turn chaotic if parents were allowed to freely choose the medium of instruction for their children.

Calling it "unacceptable", Noor Azimah charged that all science and mathematics teachers should be able to teach in either Bahasa Malaysia or English as the PPSMI policy had previously been in place for nine years.

"If the number of schools that choose English are small, then it would be even easier to provide the teachers. The reasons should be addressed head-on and not swept under the carpet after spending RM3 billion of the rakyat's hard earned income. We want an explanation," she said.

Noor Azimah said that the current education system only divided children according to race-based schools, a split that was slowly incorporating class differences as seen in the growing popularity of private and international schools.

She stressed that PPSMI was not about learning English through science and mathematics, but to provide the context to put the language into practise.

Opposition parties like the DAP have thrown their weight behind PAGE's cause, demanding the Education Ministry be more flexible and give students the option which will enable the

country to retain its best talents.

The growing row over the education policy has split the country along racial, political lines ahead of national polls likely to be called early next year.

Vocal fundamental groups are using the issue to champion their version of nationalism.

Several non-partisan civil societies have recently banded together to counter this tide but the powerful Malay-dominant political parties appear to be reluctant to commit to this hot potato issue ahead of the 13th general election.

Noor Azimah said that PAGE will be sending a letter of appeal to Najib on the matter tomorrow morning in Putrajaya.

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