

PAGE holds BN to ransom on PPSMI issue
The Malaysian Insider
October 31, 2011
By Lisa J. Ariffin

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 31 — The Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE) today admitted holding the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) to ransom over the use of English to teach science and mathematics in schools.

Yesterday, PAGE chairman Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim had bluntly said BN risks losing votes in the upcoming general election if it continues to bar students from learning science and maths in English in schools.

Noor Azimah (left) with the letter of appeal the lobby group presented to the PM, outside the PM's office in Putrajaya on October 31, 2011. — Picture by Choo Choy May
Today, the parents lobby group denied any political affiliation, saying it was only doing what was best for their children.

"Because it is real. If we don't get this and I'm going to vote and I'm a believer. And unfortunately, if I don't get this for my children that is what I will do," Noor Azimah told reporters today after sending a letter of appeal to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on the matter.

She said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had said the decision to abolish the teaching of science and mathematics in English (PPSMI) was final, but pointed out it "requires the endorsement of the PM".

"We hope that as the PM has always been saying that he is listening to the rakyat, we would like to urge him to listen to us," she said.

"He (Najib) says that people first, but we feel that parents and children are last. So please listen to us, we know they hear us, but they have to listen," she added.

Noor Azimah said the issue should not be politicised or distorted for selfish agendas.

"If the politicians are playing politics when it comes to education, if they can do that, If today's memorandum should fall on deaf ears, Noor Azimah said PAGE would organise peaceful "picnics" around the country "in support of PPSMI".

"Come November 12, we will hold peaceful picnics in Selangor, Malacca, Penang and KL to show the government that we are serious."

PAGE had previously 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 that 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.

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