

Khairy says will debate Rafizi, Ambiga
The Malaysian Insider
April 13, 2012
By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, April 13 — Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin today accepted PKR strategy director Rafizi Ramli's challenge to debate on education and agreed to debate with Bersih 2.0 co-chair Datuk Ambiga Sreenivasan on electoral reforms.

"I have agreed to debate @ambiga_s on 25 April re electoral reforms & @rafiziramli on 3 May re PTPTN. Details to come," he said on Twitter today.

The youth leader jokingly urged Ambiga to wear yellow on the day of the debate, referring to Bersih 2.0's signature colour.

To another Twitter user, the Rembau MP said Barisan Nasional (BN) politicians have always been open to such public debates, citing Umno's Kota Belud MP Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahalan, Umno Youth exco Lokman Adam, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek, deputy education minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah and Kedah Gerakan Youth chief Tan Keng Liang.

Earlier today, Rafizi challenged Khairy (picture) to debate Pakatan Rakyat's (PR) proposal to offer free education and abolish the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN).

The PKR leader had pointed out that Khairy himself had appeared to agree on Twitter two days ago that abolishing the federal student loan scheme was possible, taking a different viewpoint from his party president, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

In his tweet on Wednesday afternoon, Khairy had added, "PKR missing the point re PTPTN. Its not whether govt CAN write off the loans. Its whether the govt SHOULD. Most don't think govt should".

Najib, when responding to PR's suggestion, had claimed over the weekend that scrapping PTPTN would cost taxpayers some RM43 billion.

His deputy and Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had concurred, adding that the pact's plan to use oil profits to fund the country's education bill would severely hobble Petronas' finances.

Maintaining his party's stand, Rafizi repeated that PTPTN's current bill was not RM43 billion as claimed but RM24.7 billion, which could be repaid over a long period.

"The only investment needed is about RM2 billion a year and many resources can be used for this, including channelling oil and gas profits into the education field, slashing our defence bill, combatting corruption and plugging leakages and wastages," he suggested in a statement here.

The RM2 billion sum, he added, was very small in comparison with Najib's allegedly "unprofitable" administrative decisions - the RM1 billion grant to Maju Holdings in the sale of

the Kuala Lumpur - Putrajaya highway, writing off Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli's RM589 million debt to Danaharta and the RM250 million loan for the scandal-ridden National Feedlot Centre (NFC) project.

"In reality, wastages from each year are far more than the RM2 billion needed to abolish the PTPTN," he said.

"Even more important, this would be a good opportunity for us to review the entire structure of the country's education system."

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