



*By Neville Spykerman*

*First published in [The Malaysian Insider](#)*

SHAH ALAM, Nov 25 — Selangor moved today to ban its civil servants, employees of state subsidiaries and students at state-owned education institutions from attending any Biro Tata Negara (BTN) courses with immediate effect.

Dr Halimah Ali announced the decision today after the weekly state executive council meeting.

Halimah, a state executive council member whose portfolio includes education, described BTN programmes as "indoctrination by the Barisan Nasional (BN) government".

"The courses promote racism and my own children who have attended BTN have been given booklets that encourage hate towards the opposition," said Halimah.

"The programmes are not positive to young minds, and are a waste of money which could have used to foster real unity."

BTN courses have been running for years, and are intended to instil nationalistic values and patriotism, but are now seen as more of a propaganda unit. The courses are for university students on public scholarships and civil servants. BTN is under the Prime Minister's Department.

Under the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) administration's new directives, students at Selangor government-owned institutions of higher learning including Universiti Industri Selangor (Unisel), Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor and Inpens Selangor will no longer be required to go for BTN courses.

Last week, a group of young PR elected representatives urged the Selangor government to stop allowing students to be sent for what they called "brainwashing propaganda" programmes by BTN.

The group of seven PR lawmakers had also said BTN courses — compulsory for local university students and civil servants — taught students to hate and were contrary to their original purpose as well as the Constitution.

Seri Setia state lawmaker Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, speaking from his own experience, said they were told that PKR members were Jewish agents, that DAP was a Singapore party, while PAS was labelled a deviant movement.

Batu Caves lawmaker Amirudin Shari said a big part of the programme had nothing to do with nation building or education but was an Umno and BN race-based programme where participants are indoctrinated with propaganda about "Ketuanan Melayu".

It is understood that the BN federal government plans to overhaul the BTN courses in response to growing criticisms.

*The Malaysian Insider* had reported last week that the proposal to revamp BTN courses is part of initiatives being pushed by Datuk Seri Idris Jala and a task force set up to promote 1 Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Razak's concept announced when he took the top job on April 3.

1 Malaysia is one of several laboratories set up to push through ideas on Key Performance Index (KPI) and National Key Results Areas (NKRAs) that Najib knows will be the tipping point in the next general election.

His ruling BN coalition was badly beaten in Election 2008 under the leadership of former Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi when it lost four more states and 82 federal seats to give up its customary two-thirds parliamentary majority.

It was felt the BTN needed a complete makeover to promote inclusiveness.