

22/10/1999

Don't overlook the benefits gained from University Act

Hisham Abdullah

IN Indonesia, it looks like the students are very politically-minded and are responsible for most of the demonstrations and riots breaking out in that country.

In my view, it is a blessing in disguise that we have the University and University Colleges Act.

Among other things, the Act prohibits students from taking any active part in political activities including the holding of any unauthorised gathering or demonstration while they are still studying in universities or colleges.

The last thing we want to see is our universities and colleges turning into a nest or haven for the students to carry out, almost at will, unhealthy political activities against the government which are detrimental to the peace and security of our country and which might have an adverse effect on our economic stability.

We also do not like to see our country become like Indonesia where massive street demonstrations and rioting led by radical students had resulted in the downfall of governments.

The 1998 reformasi demonstrations were held in Kuala Lumpur by pro-Anwar supporters, certain political activist groups and some disgruntled Umno and former Umno members, including misguided students.

They were inspired by the so-called Alternatif Party and demonstrated to force the government under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to resign, but they failed miserably.

This is because the majority of the people are still solidly behind the Prime Minister, under whose leadership this country has progressed.

The unauthorised gathering held by about a hundred students at the University of Malaya premises recently during the visit by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi when the students made a number of demands like calling for a Royal Commission to be set up to enquire into the alleged Anwar arsenic poisoning case, leads to strong suspicion that certain scheming opposition politicians or quarters closely aligned to opponents of the Government are poisoning the minds of the students.

The students should be wary of such tactics adopted by these opposition groups, who are hell-bent on disrupting the peace and security of the country to gain mileage for their own selfish ends.

The students should therefore concentrate more on their studies.

Some of them could be destined to become the future leaders of this country if they stay out of trouble.

They should not get deeply involved in unhealthy political activities, or they might live to regret this for the rest of their lives.

Political issues should be left to the Government and the political parties to handle.

It must be remembered that the Government knows what is best for the people and the students.

I personally feel that there are good reasons for maintaining the University and University Colleges Act.

As for the Anwar poisoning issue, there is no doubt the opposition is politicising it to gain sympathy and votes in the coming general election.