

**Repeal UUCA in its entirety, gov't told**  
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Politicians from both the BN and Pakatan Rakyat have called for the repeal of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (UUCA) in its entirety.

DAP stalwart Lim Kit Siang, along with Gerakan vice-president Mah Siew Keong and MCA Central committee member Loh Seng Kok, were in unison on the issue as they issued separate statements.

Lim, the Ipoh Timor MP, further urged Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak not to appeal the landmark Court of Appeal ruling that yesterday declared Section 15(5) of the Act to be unconstitutional.

Describing the court's decision as an early test of Najib's political will, Lim said the BN has been questioned over its true commitment to initiate a sea-change of democratisation.

"This follows the adverse national and international reactions to the high-handed government crackdown of the July 9 Bersih 2.0 rally and the pledges to repeal the draconian Internal Security Act, Printing Presses and Publications Act and Sedition Act."

"Najib should know all his promises of 'democratisation and political transformation' have evoked more cynicism, scepticism and disbelief than hope, expectation and belief. The government has not demonstrated any change of mindset and mentality that (its) whole apparatus has been oriented to these new challenges."

Lim described the court's decision as most timely in upholding human rights, especially after allegations of a dangerous conspiracy by former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and former police chief Abdul Rahim Noor.

"The question now is whether Najib and his cabinet are prepared to step forward to support the Court of Appeal majority decision and demonstrate a new spirit and mindset of democratisation and political transformation by overruling the decision by University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) to appeal the judgment as announced by their counsel Muhammad Shafee Abdullah."

#### BN parties' stance

Mah similarly asked the Higher Education Ministry (MoHE) not to appeal the court decision. Instead it should consider repealing the UUCA to defend students' freedom of expression and right to political participation.

"It is important that (students) are given ample exposure to politics as they are the ones who will determine the future of our country," he said.

"The standpoint of Gerakan and Gerakan Youth has always been to repeal or abolish the UUCA to uphold the basic individual freedoms enshrined in the federal constitution."

He described the restrictions under the Act as being unreasonable and unrealistic.

Mah congratulated the four former UKM students involved in the litigation, and lauded the ruling as a "a step closer to wider freedom of expression ... and ... academic freedom for the purpose of pursuing knowledge among students".

MCA's Loh too sought to persuade the MoHE not to take the Court of Appeal ruling higher.

"The BN administration should also seriously consider amending or completely repealing Section 15 of UUCA.

"It is MCA's position that university students are mature enough to think critically and therefore should be allowed to participate in political activities and campaigns as long as they do not become office-bearers in political parties."

Higher Education Minister Khaled Nordin has announced that the court decision will be taken to the cabinet for a decision on the appeal to the Federal Court.

Fundamental rights affirmed

A human rights group, meanwhile, described the ruling as reaffirming the fundamental right to political participation.

"It is pivotal to note that the right to political participation is to be enjoyed without discrimination," Fadhiah Nadwa Fikri, coordinator for Lawyers for Liberty (LFL), said in a statement.

These rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are "central to the practice of democracy".

Lauding the ruling, Fadhiah said it underscores the court's duty to mete out justice and to "warn the government against continuing repressive action".

She added that the decision is timely in the wake of the controversy over law professor Abdul Aziz Bari's brief suspension by Universiti Islam Antarabangsa, which the group deems to be a violation of free speech and academic freedom.

The Bar Council echoed Gerakan and LFL in commending the judges who allowed the appeal of the UKM students (right), "for their courageous and progressive stand in giving meaning to Article 10(1)(a) and taking a step forward in restoring our lost liberties".

Vice-president Christopher Leong cited Article 10(1)(a) of the federal constitution that guarantees freedom of expression.

The UUCA was amended following the Baling demonstrations in the early 1970s, and restricted student involvement in political activities.

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