

## **'Anwar will speak at UM gate if all else fails'**

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If Universiti Malaya blocks Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim from entering the campus, he will proceed to deliver his speech at UM's main Kuala Lumpur gate, the student organisers said today.

Persatuan Mahasiswa Universiti Malaya (PMUM) president Fahmi Zainol said this is after the university still refused to give approval in a final meeting this afternoon.

"We ask all students and participants to gather at UM's main gate at 8pm.

"If we are allowed in at the last minute, we will walk to Dataran Tuanku Canselor.

"Otherwise, we will hold the event in front of the main gate," Fahmi (left) said in a statement.

Temperatures are rising at the campus today, with tightened security and vandals spraying anti-Anwar messages on billboards outside the gates.

The university, from which Anwar graduated, has been pressuring PMUM from holding the talk, 'Anwar Ibrahim: 40 years from UM to jail', on the eve of the PKR de facto leader's final appeal against his Sodomy II conviction.

Last week UM issued Fahmi a show cause letter for organising the event.

Fahmi also rubbished a WhatsApp message purportedly showing him telling students to crash through the university gates if they are not allowed in, calling it "slander" and "propaganda".

"If we are not allowed in, we will not take any radical action. As students, we know how to evaluate the situation," he said.

He have his assurance that Anwar's speech, be it on campus or off campus, would go on without trouble.

"Aside from Anwar, we will not allow any other quarters (politicians) to speak. Only student representatives will speak," Fahmi said.

He added that Anwar was invited in his capacity as a member of the UM's alumni and no symbol of any political party would be allowed if the university allows them onto its grounds.

## UM staff criticise expulsion threat

Meanwhile, Universiti Malaya Academic Staff Association (PKAUM) criticised the university's threat to expel students responsible for organising the event.

"The UM administration's antagonistic stance toward PMUM's Oct 27 gathering is inconsistent with aspirations to be an internationally recognised and top-ranked institution.

"Let us stop pretending that we can be a top university when we cannot guarantee and protect academic freedom and freedom of speech, PKAUM president Azmi Sharom (left) said in a statement today.

Azmi said UM should provide a safe environment for the event dubbed "40 Years from UM to Jail", as it did for previous peaceful protests in the university.

"Universities must be safe havens for our youth to explore ideas and ideals, and to express their thoughts and sentiments.

"The only prohibitions should be on hate speech, defamation, violence, and other legal infringements, for which general laws are adequate," Azmi said.

He added that the university's claim that Anwar's visit will tarnish its reputation is uncalled for and that there was no basis for such fear.