

300 student leaders defy ban to attend meet
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About 300 student leaders today defied threats of disciplinary action from campus authorities to attend a national university students' congress in Petaling Jaya.

They were, however, forced to sit on the floor after the bookings of the original venue in Taman Setiawangsa was cancelled at the last minute.

kongres gerakan mahasiwa nasional 200310Universiti Malaya had yesterday barred students from attending the convention, warning that they could be subjected to disciplinary action.

UM vice-chancellor Dr Ghauth Jasmon said in a campus circular that the convention contravened section 15 of the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA).

"Therefore, all students are prohibited from participating or involving themselves in any of the congress' activities," he said.

He warned that students found defying his directive could be punished under the UUCA.

According to organiser Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia, the Dewan Centrum Setiawangsa was the third to have cancelled their bookings as a result of what the students believe to be political pressure.

The 2010 National University Student Movement Congress, held today, finally relocated to the Petaling Jaya City Council Civic Hall where participants shared the venue with those attending another meeting - the Selangor government's National Youth Conference.

"When I arrived (at Dewan Centrum Setiawangsa) for our rehearsal yesterday the management told me that they were instructed not to allow any university student activities in the hall," said congress director Mohd Hilman Idham.

'Don't invite Nurul Izzah'

However, according to Hilman, the manager said that the students can still use the hall if they cancel their invitation to PKR Lembah Pantai parliamentarian Nurul Izzah Ibrahim to officiate the event.

"They also demanded that we pay a 50 percent deposit, and that we show them the congress' programme," he said.

Hilman also revealed that notices were put up today in university campuses warning that students who attend the congress risk having disciplinary action taken against them.

Representatives from the university's student affairs departments also visited residential colleges to remind students to stay away from the event.

kongres gerakan mahasiwa nasional 200310 nurul izzah anwarNurul Izzah, who launched the event with a rousing speech about her involvement in the reformasi movement as a student, said that such strong-arm tactics inadvertently force students to the streets.

“Stop this hypocritical behaviour. (The government tells) these students not to demonstrate in their streets, and yet they are harassed when they want to hold an indoor congress,” she said.

Meanwhile, organiser Shazni Munir Mohd Ithnin called for those behind the harassment to come out in the open.

“We don't know who is doing this to us, but we want to send them the message that we are rallying the grassroots to bring change to Malaysia.

“If they feel uneasy about this, then they should direct their dissatisfactions at us, and not harass the venue managers,” he said.

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