



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim fielding questions during a dialogue session with UiTM's Student Representative Council in Shah Alam yesterday. PIC BY FAIZ ANUAR

TOTAL REPEAL UNNECESSARY

PM ALLAYS CONCERN OVER AUKU REVIEW

Only provisions that pressure students, lecturers should be removed, Anwar tells student council

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday addressed concerns raised by the student community, including the possible repeal of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (AUKU) as well as doubts over Universiti Teknologi Mara's (UiTM) Bumiputera status.

Anwar, during a dialogue session with UiTM's Student Representative Council at its main campus here, said the call to repeal AUKU would be studied by Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin and ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Abdul Razak Jaafar.

However, he said that AUKU was an important and comprehensive legislation, and that a total repeal was unnecessary.

"Only the provisions that pressure students and lecturers should be scrutinised further

(and abolished).

"There are provisions which are crucial. I don't think it is appropriate to abolish (AUKU) altogether. We can improve it through amendments of several provisions," he said.

University student movement Gerakan Mahasiswa had last month demanded the abolishment of AUKU and for it to be replaced by a new act that was more progressive, fair, balanced, and sustainable to guarantee student autonomy in universities.

Anwar also fielded a question from a student regarding claims by Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA) president Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman that he was barred from entering a #JelajahMansuhAUKU dialogue session in UiTM.

The Muar member of parliament claimed that the university administration had refused to allow the session to be held on the basis of "preserving harmony".

UiTM, however, had said the programme organisers did not officially apply to hold the session.

In reply, Anwar said the organisation of any programme had to go through proper channels.

"I am open to it. Anyone can come to universities (to have programmes), but they should follow the right channel and regulations.

"Those who want to organise a programme must first inform (the university) and its location.

"I believe we should not stop it, unless there are racial and religious sentiments involved, in which case, I will not tolerate it at all," he said.

He reminded students that tertiary education should enable them to develop good manners and reach a high level of civilisation, and not just to secure a profession, position and power.

He said under his Malaysia Madani government, he had clearly objected and protested against elitists who used their powers to steal the nation's wealth, besides enriching their cronies and clans.

"I am not only against this attitude but also the mindset, which needs to be changed."

He said students at the tertiary level should establish a new paradigm and mindset to be able to develop good manners and a high-level civilisation.

"You (students) are not just responsible to build your profession and family, but also a civilisation, and that civilisation will stand with confidence, high values and knowledge," he said.

In reply to a question on street demonstrations and rallies, Anwar said students today needed to think creatively.

He said they should not necessarily adopt the methods used in the 1970s and 1980s in conveying their dissatisfaction because the situation had changed.

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No need to resort to street protests like before, Anwar tells students

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He said there was no problem with young people protesting and the government would not impose any restrictions as long as they obeyed the law and did not promote extremist ideologies related to race and religion.

“So, do you really need to organise street demonstrations and rallies? It was done before (in the 1970s and 1980s) because the students had no other platforms.

“If you have issues with a particular ministry, let the minister know. Our instruction is clear, that is to give students the opportunity to voice out their opinions. There is no need to resort to the method used before,” he said.

Anwar also responded to claims that UiTM’s status as an educational institution for Malays and Bumiputera was in jeopardy. He said the Malay and Bumiputera rights for UiTM would be protected at all times.

“Many claimed that if I became prime minister, UiTM would be shut down. This is pure slander.

“Back when, I was the student council head, we were the ones who fought the hardest. We were consistent and did not argue about Malay and Bumiputera rights in UiTM,” he said.

The prime minister also addressed a question on the finan-

cial burden faced by students over the cost of flight tickets between Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

He said the government was willing to consider subsidies for the students’ flight tickets.

The government, he said, understood the burden faced by students, especially those who wanted to return to their hometowns.

“It makes sense to have subsidies for flight tickets for students. Maybe we can negotiate this matter with the airlines and consider having it once a year.

“Not all students can afford to purchase tickets and it could be a burden to them,” he said.

In another development, Anwar said the government would expand the e-wallet financial aid to all tertiary education students.

“I have decided that the e-wallet facility should also benefit all students,” he said in reply to a question from a student leader from UiTM Melaka.

The student representative had asked if the e-wallet, which was limited to those aged between 18 and 20, would include students aged between 21 and 23.

During the tabling of the 2023 Budget in February, Anwar, who is finance minister, announced an e-wallet aid worth RM200 each to Malaysian youths aged between 18 and 20.