

Umno scared of undergrads, says Anwar
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 29 — Umno is desperate and resorting to physical threats to intimidate undergraduates from pushing for greater academic freedom and taking an active role in politics, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said.

“While the awareness of academic freedom is growing and maturing among undergraduates, the Umno leadership is becoming increasingly vicious and restive in facing this push and is acting blindly in an apparent physical threat that is rude and reckless,” the PKR leader said in a statement late last night.

Anwar said the Umno leadership is becoming increasingly vicious and restive. — File pic “Datuk Seri Najib Razak’s commitment to purportedly amend section 15 of the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) and give more academic freedom to undergraduates in partisan politics is nothing more than empty talk,” he added.

The de facto head of the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) opposition pact urged the ruling Barisan Nasional’s (BN) lynchpin party to quit pressuring undergraduates following recent news reports concerning student activist Adam Adli Abdul Halim.

The 21-year old student at the Sultan Idris University of Education (UPSI) hit headlines after he was purportedly caught lowering a banner bearing the likeness of Prime Minister Najib from a flagpole outside Umno’s headquarters here on December 17.

Adam Adli claimed to have received death threats and was allegedly punched by a policeman following the incident.

His university administration has also issued a show-cause letter to him for tarnishing the institution’s name, according to UPSI Undergraduate Solidarity chairman Ahmad Syukrie Che Abd Razab as cited in a Bernama Online report.

Anwar said Umno-owned media had highlighted the incident “as if it were a major crime while defamation, death threats, crime and corruption are often marginalised”.

“The development involving Adam Adli... now facing action under the UUCA shows Umno’s apparent fear towards the rise of undergraduates,” Anwar said.

“The act to punish, by using the UUCA, undergraduates after the incident clearly shows it is aimed to scare and as a move to weaken their spirit and commitment,” he added.

The 64-year-old — a known firebrand student activist in his day who was detained for 20 months in 1974 under the Internal Security Act (ISA) — said university authorities have taken similar harsh action against students in past cases, including expelling them from campus.

He repeated his opposition pact’s commitment to repeal the UUCA and focus on raising the quality of education based on academic freedom and intellectual strength should it take

Putrajaya.

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