

Repeal UUCA before elections, undergraduates urge PM
The Malaysian Insider
December 19, 2011
By Lisa J. Ariffin

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 19 — Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia (SMM) has given Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak until "before the elections" to repeal the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA), which the undergraduates say denies them their academic freedom.

"We want the prime minister to repeal UUCA completely and return autonomy to universities or the undergraduates will use all resources to bring change in leadership to a government which listens to students," SMM chairman Ahmad Syukri Abdul Razak told reporters at a press conference here.

"This is a clear message to (Najib) that his transformation programme has failed to bring confidence to the people. Our protest on December 17 was symbolic to show that we have lost faith in government leadership and demand a drastic change," he added, referring to the student lobby for academic freedom last Saturday.

Recently, Najib announced the government would soon amend section 15 of the UUCA to allow students aged above 21 to become members of political parties.

However, former Malaysia Youth and Students Democratic Movement (Dema) political co-ordinator Teh Yee Keong said simply amending the Act was insufficient.

"The trend of amending the Act each time a minister takes over shows AUKU (UUCA) is strengthening its grip on undergraduates," he said.

"All these announcements are seen as populist moves to gain sympathy from the people who are showing more courage to protest against the weakness in his leadership," he added.

Teh said the student movement against UUCA had even drafted a "Magna Carta for students rights" to replace UUCA in 2008 that was handed over to each MP including current Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah.

"His statement that he has not read or does not know of this is false and not genuine as we had delivered it in early 2009," he said.

"This is a lie. He does not care for undergraduates. All this while he has shown he's concerned with student welfare, but in truth he is not because this Act (that is important to undergraduates) is ignored."

Asked to comment on Saturday's protest, which disrupted traffic along one of the city's busiest roads, Ahmad Syukri said the inconvenience caused to disgruntled motorists was akin to the "restrictions" faced by undergraduates.

"You cannot blame the organisers for interrupting traffic flow or businesses," Teh added.

"The police should have managed it better."

On Saturday, the student activists had gathered at the Masjid Jamek LRT station before walking to the Suhakam office in the Maju Junction building and from there to Umno's headquarters at Menara Datuk Onn, next to the Putra World Trade Centre.

Apart from lobbying the government to repeal the law, the 100-strong group also urged the government to grant them free rein to manage their own student affairs, including financial matters.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2011 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/repeal-uuca-before-elections-undergraduates-urge-pm/>