

MCA Youth: Student politics a must for democracy to grow
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 31 — Lauding today's Court of Appeal ruling that the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) was unconstitutional, MCA Youth has called the ban on student politics as "unhealthy for any democracy to mature".

MCA Youth national chairman Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong said student idealism through activism should be acknowledged, and that a continued ban on student politics was akin to looking down on students as "children incapable of making independent decisions".

"So long as students are not unruly during their political activities where responsible freedom of expression is practised and do not touch on seditious or criminal content, MCA Youth fails to see why Section 15(5)(A) was even inserted in the first place. "Meanwhile, it should also be pointed out that the Appeal Court ruling is not a carte blanche for students to start rampaging the streets similar to the London riots under the guise of freedom of expression and association," he said in a statement today.

The deputy education minister also pointed out that one of the resolutions passed during this year's MCA Youth annual general meeting called for the abolition of Section 15 of UUCA to return the freedoms of assembly and association to university students.

"It does not make sense to allow student elections on campus yet deny undergraduate and post graduate students to take part in political activities," he said, noting that the same ban did not apply to students in private or foreign universities.

In a majority 2-1 judgment, a three-man panel of judges ruled that Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) breached Article 10 of the Federal Constitution when it disciplined four students involved in a political campaign last year under Section 15(5)(a) of the UUCA.

However, it is unclear whether the judgment allows all students in higher education centres to take part in political activities.

Section 15(5)(a) of the UUCA states: "No student of the University and no organisation, body or group of students of the University which is established by, under or in accordance with the Constitution, shall express or do anything which may reasonably be construed as expressing support for or sympathy with or opposition to any political party, whether in or outside Malaysia".

"It is an archaic law to deny students the right to political activities when many of them have reached the age of majority ... and have a right to be a registered voter, yet prevented from any form of political activism or campaigning on issues," Wee said.

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