

**Good to keep politics outside universities, say BN MPs**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**November 24, 2011**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 24 — Barisan Nasional (BN) lawmakers agreed today with the government's decision to maintain the ban on political activities in university campuses, saying it would help students focus on their studies.

They said it was sufficient to amend the University and University Colleges Act (UUCA) to allow student participation in politics but insisted that learning institutions should not double as political arenas.

Tangga Batu MP Datuk Idris Haron said the "spirit of the UUCA" must be retained to ensure that students would not be distracted from their studies by engaging in political activities.

"The UUCA cannot be abolished entirely but Section 15 can be amended.

"The spirit and objective of the UUCA, which is to disallow students from being swayed by politics and distracted, must still be there... the campus is where the students pursue their studies," he told The Malaysian Insider when met in Parliament.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak unexpectedly announced plans to amend the controversial section of the Act in Parliament today, promising to allow students to become members of political parties.

He however stressed that political activities would remain banned from university and college campuses.

The prime minister's announcement, which raised eyebrows in the House, drew flak from opposition lawmakers today who described the decision as a "window-dressing" move to woo young voters into Barisan Nasional's (BN) fold.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) MPs, who have long championed allowing students to actively participate in politics, said amending the law was insufficient if it still meant that students could not openly engage in politics while in campus.

"But here, we need to view all spectrums of the UUCA. It is not just that the UUCA appears to be blocking student development, that it chokes student freedom.

"Is it doing that now?" Idris asked.

The Umno lawmaker pointed out that despite provisions in the UUCA, university students currently still dabble quietly in politics while on campus.

"Even though we have the law, political activities are still going on there.

"The instigation, the ceramahs, the slanderous activities... so, if with the law they still do it, what would happened without the law?" he said.

He added that amending Section 15 to allow students to be political party members proved that the Najib administration was listening to the aspirations of the students.

"But it must be within certain parameters," he said.

Hulu Selangor MP P. Kamalanathan agreed with his BN colleague, saying that universities should stay as institutions to promote education and not politics.

"One of the most important things in entering a university is to become a learned person, to continue your education and be a better person in life," he said.

"As a student, you must have your priorities right. If you do, I think you can go far," he said.

Temerloh MP and Umno deputy minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said students would likely rejoice in Najib's announcement today, adding that it was proof that the government is adapting and changing with the times.

"It is an affirmations and recognition of the rights of students, the government is listening," he said.

The Malaysian Insider

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