

Pakatan moots more UUCA amendments, wants BN support
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 17 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers have appealed to Barisan Nasional (BN) for bipartisan support on their proposal today to push for more legislative amendments promoting student participation in politics.

Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua today filed a motion notice under Standing Orders 57(2), seeking to add six changes to the amendments Bill for the University and University Colleges Act 1971, which is slotted for debate during the current parliamentary sitting.

The government tabled last week three Bills for first reading in the Dewan Rakyat, each aiming to allow university students to become active members of political parties – University and University Colleges (Amendments) Bill (UUCA), Private Higher Educational Institutions (Amendments) Bill (PHEIA) and Education Institutional Institutions (EII) (Discipline) (Amendments) Bill.

Speaking at a press conference here today, Pua said that PR had actually wanted a “thorough revamp” or “repeal” of the entire UUCA.

But, he acknowledged that this demand would not likely to be entertained and as such, more amendments should be made to the existing law.

Among others, Pua proposed amendments to Section 15(3) of the UUCA Bill, which he said effectively prohibits a student from commenting on the outcome of a court case that finds an accused guilty of a particular crime.

“This is totally impractical. How can you say the student is not allowed to comment if someone is found guilty in court? This, to me, is very restrictive,” he said.

“For example, if there is a case in court and a conviction is made and the matter becomes a case in the university ... are the students then barred from discussing if the court decision is right or wrong,” he pointed out.

Pua said that law students should have the right to discuss if a judge had erred in his or her decision, what evidence was used to reach the decision and if it was appropriately used.

“For example, we disagree that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was found guilty of corruption ... so students cannot say that the findings were incorrect?” he pointed out.

Another clause that Pua said requires further amendments are Section 4(a) and (b) of the proposed Bill.

Section 4(a), he pointed out, may allow a student to speak on matters concerning the discipline he or she is in but effectively prohibits the student from speaking on other matters outside his or her study subject.

“Meaning, if I’m a law student on constitutional law, I cannot comment on criminal law.

“If I’m a biology student, I’m not allowed to speak on anything other than biology,” he claimed.

Section 4 (b), added Pua, grants the university board full authority to decide where a student can speak, even if the organisers are legal under law, so long as it feels it is detrimental to university regulations.

“We want this section scrapped entirely,” he said.

Pua's proposed amendments will be slotted for committee stage debates on the UUCA Bill.

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