Students question backbenchers' support of UUCA clause repeal

STUDENT representatives gave a mixed reaction on the recent support by the BN Backbenchers Club (BNBBC) of the repeal of Section 15 of the Universities and University Colleges to prevent politically-active students from taking up campus posts.

It was reported, yesterday, that the BNNBC, led by Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaludin, would table a supplementary amendment in Parliament, next week, to take out Section 15(2)(c) which states that students who enrol in political parties cannot engage in campus elections. Section 15(2)(d) prevents students from bringing political activities onto the campus.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia student council president Ahmad Muzammil Muhd Hairi questioned the Backbenchers' move. "Their intentions are questionable as they appear to want student support. These are the same people trying to convince students of the importance of paying their PTPTN loans."

He said students would most likely opt to take campus positions rather than participate in politics if the restriction stays.

He added that prior to talk of the law being amended, students were already taking part in politics illegally as any request to join politics would be turned down by the university vice chancellor.

Universiti Putra Malaysia student council president Iqbal Ismat Nordin said that universities must introduce a mechanism to control possible negative ideologies being brought into campus.

Ismat said the UUCA provision which bars university students from holding positions in campus if they held political positions outside is uncalled for. "Controlling the minds and movement of students may make them passive and rigid. Students should be given the right to develop critical thinking and such skills can be developed when they participate in off-campus activities."