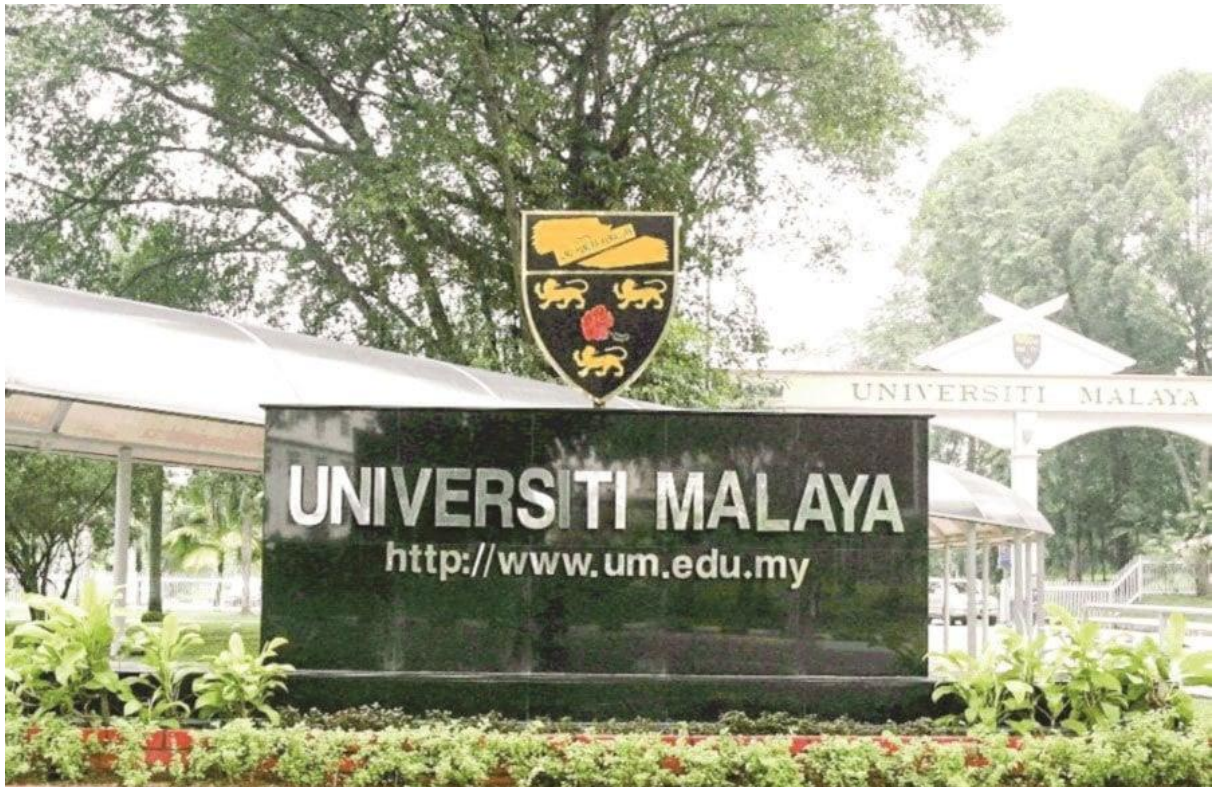


Anwar urged to repeal Auku law, once used to bar him from campus

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The Universiti Malaya Students' Union has urged Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to repeal a law previously used against students who invited him to speak on campus when he was the opposition leader. - NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: The Universiti Malaya Students' Union has urged Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to repeal a law previously used against students who invited him to speak on campus when he was the opposition leader.

Ooi Guo Shen, the union's president, criticised the Universities and University Colleges Act (Auku) 1971 for censoring students.

He argued that it indirectly led to the suspension of six students and a fine against two others in 2014.

The students, dubbed UM8, were punished for inviting Anwar to speak at the university without its approval and were charged under the University of Malaya (Discipline of Students) Rules 1999.

Ooi claimed that the university's regulations cited in taking action against the students were "empowered" by Auku.

"With Auku, students don't have the right to speak freely. If you want meaningful initiatives for students, you need to empower them," he told FMT.

By repealing the Act, he said, the government would acknowledge that these students were victims and that justice had finally been served.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin had earlier said the ministry did not have intentions to repeal Auku, as it still had significance, particularly concerning university administration.

Khaled explained that the process of repealing the Act would disrupt public universities' management and require additional review, as it related to other laws.

Nonetheless, he mentioned that the ministry welcomed proposals to improve the present Act.

Meanwhile, DAP Youth chief Dr Kelvin Yii called for the law to be reviewed to empower university students.

Yii, who is also the Bandar Kuching MP, said Auku restricted the students' autonomy to a certain extent, and the need to "control" them was "completely outdated".

"Universities should empower young people. A university is a reservoir for learning, which is why the laws that govern the students and the university should reflect that spirit and empower them."