

200,000 students go to polls today

EXCITING TIMES:

Pro-Aspirasi leading in first round of campus elections

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THE nation's most exciting campus elections end today, serving as a precursor to the general election with some 200,000 students at 15 universities voting for leaders who will represent them in the 2012-2013 academic session.

Within a few hours, the results will be made known, although the establishment-friendly Pro-Aspirasi has claimed victory in most of the seats contested in the first round of campus elections in five universities last week.

Rival Pro-Mahasiswa group, which is known to be sympathetic to opposition parties, has put up a fight to regain its momentum.

Last week saw elections held at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Universiti Teknikal Malaysia (UteM) and Universiti Tun Hussein Malaysia (UTHM).

Unofficial results show that Pro-Aspirasi dominated 226 seats in UiTM at its campuses nationwide. UTHM saw a big win for Pro-Aspirasi, when its candidates won 25 of the 27 seats contested. In UniMAP, of the 31 seats contested, 16 reportedly have been won unopposed by Pro-Aspirasi.

However, in UniSZA, the candidates do not affiliate themselves with either of the rival groups and the winners consider themselves "independents".

It was the same in UTeM, as all 19 faculty and seven general seats were won by independent candidates.

A check by *New Straits Times* at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) yesterday found that campaigning had proceeded smoothly and candidates were canvassing for votes according to regulations.

While candidates have been allowed to give campaign speeches, the university forbade the putting up of posters and flyers and only permitted students to distribute their manifestos.

Foo Chuan Yi, 22, a Pro-Aspirasi candidate, said he had been active in both "hard" and "soft" campaigning, with the former referring to non-electronic means, such as speeches and distribution of flyers, while the latter refers to electronic campaigning, such as on social networks.

The third-year Bachelor of Science student said he had focused on campaigning at residential colleges during the weekend and covered academic areas on Friday and Monday.

Foo said he was pushing to improve campus facilities.

Another candidate, Wong Siew Shuang, who considers herself an independent, had relied on support from friends to help her distribute her manifesto across campus.

"What the candidate promises appeals to me as it touches on the parking situation in our faculty and helping practical-based students secure scholarships."
Mohd Fetry Adzim
UPM student