

RUN-UP TO 2015 UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Campus polls see shift towards pro-govt groups

STRONG MESSAGE: 'Pro-Aspirasi' factions win big on student welfare platform

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FOR the last few terms, the majority of student representative councils at public universities were dominated by the "pro-Mahasiswa" group, seen as supportive of the opposition.

This year's campus elections, however, witnessed a surprising shift in power after the "pro-Aspirasi" group, seen as pro-government, won in polls with landslide victories.

With just 2½ years to go until the next general election, this development may impact the way political parties attempt to win the hearts and minds of the youth.

It is estimated that more than one million youths, a majority of them university undergraduates, will be eligible to cast their ballots in the 14th General Election, slated to be held in 2018.

The "pro-Aspirasi" group in Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) dominated this year's campus election by win-

ning 21 seats, while the "pro-Mahasiswa" group captured 12 seats.

Muhamad Aiman Mohd Nahzeri, president of UUM's students' representative council, attributed the victory to its "student-oriented" election manifesto and capable candidates.

"The victory of the 'pro-Aspirasi' group in most public universities is largely due to their candidates' credibility and better manifestos. More importantly, students wanted to see a different leadership at the helm."

Aiman said a case in point was Universiti Malaya's (UM) campus election results, which saw the pro-government student group scoring an unlikely victory against the popular

"pro-Mahasiswa" group.

"The undergraduates there sent a strong message that they want leaders to focus on the students' welfare and not on outside political agendas," the 21-year-old law student said.

Aiman, however, said the recent campus election results should not be the only yardstick to measure youth support for the government.

"The world of campus politics is different from actual politics. Students don't care which side the candidates are on. What's important is whether the candidates can perform well."

Pro-government student leader Mohamad Aiman Adam, president of Uni-

versiti Teknologi Mara's (UiTM) students' representative council, said students were no longer voting emotionally.

"Students today are mature enough to think rationally. In my view, the victory of the 'pro-Aspirasi' group is not an indication of support for the government, but tells us that they are mature enough to choose the best leaders without being politically biased," said the 21-year-old library management student.

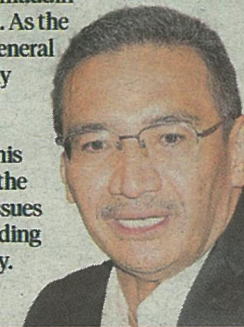
Aiman, now serving his second term as UiTM's student council president, said support for the pro-government student group at the university had increased from 53 per cent last year to 66 per cent this year.

UUM Vice-Chancellor Prof Datuk Seri Mohamed Mustafa Ishak said the recent campus election results showed that voting behaviour among undergraduates was becoming harder to predict.

"They (the students) are issue-driven. So, it depends on how good

IN THE NST ON SATURDAY

Umno has often emerged stronger through adversities, says party vice-president Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein. As the Umno general assembly draws near, he reveals his take on the recent issues surrounding the party.



you are at tackling issues of concern to them. Any political party that is able to address these issues and come up with convincing solutions will get their support," he said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) students' representative council president Mohamad Syzrul Yahya said the success of "pro-Aspirasi" student leaders this year proved that youths were becoming more politically aware.

The 22-year-old Bachelor of Science (Human Development) student said the political games played by the opposition no longer fooled university students.

"The shift in support for pro-government leaders is a good sign for the current government to continue ruling the country.

"The big wins by 'pro-Aspirasi' representatives is a show of support for candidates who will one day lead the nation," he said, adding that UPM's "pro-Aspirasi" manifesto this year focused on the well-being of the students.

Voter turnout at UPM stood at 80 per cent in the recent university election, where the "pro-Aspirasi" movement won 34 seats out of 45 it contested, an increase of six seats from the previous year.



**Muhamad
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