

Deputy minister backs amending of varsity law

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Deputy Higher Education Minister Saifuddin Abdullah personally supports amending the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971, particularly to Section 15 (5), which bars students from taking part in politics.

This is in line with Monday's Court of Appeal decision which declared the section as unconstitutional.

NONESaifuddin (left) said he had many times voiced out on the matter and even wrote in newspapers for its amendment, besides having tabled a proposal on this in the Umno supreme council.

"There are people calling for the amendment and some calling for the repealing of the UUCA. In actuality, we are on the same wavelength, that is, we do not like Section 15.

"We want university students to have a voice and to participate in politics. For this, we have to amend Section 15," he said at a forum on new politics last night.

Saifuddin said an amendment had to be made to increase the participation of university students.

Later, when speaking to Malaysiakini, Saifuddin said the question of whether the government would appeal Monday's decision was yet to be brought to the cabinet.

Any decision made should not be seen as who wins or loses.

"We have to look at it in terms of morality and intellectualism," added Saifuddin, who is the MP for Temerloh.

'Not enough discussions on PPSMI'

Asked what his position would be should the cabinet decide to appeal the decision in the Federal Court, he said he would abide by it.

"However, it is too premature to say this, for it is yet to reach that stage. We can still discuss the issue."

On the Teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) , Saifuddin said the problem had reemerged because there had not been enough discussions when the move was first introduced and when it was scrapped.

"Hence, we are caught in the middle. The main thing is how to balance the choices to achieve national unity," he said in reply to a question during the forum earlier.

"Do not make political threats. This concerns education and I prefer that this is discussed further. The present situation reflects there are two groups, one supporting and the other opposing the PPSMI."

The Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE) has called on the government to provide an option to maintain the PPSMI in national primary and secondary schools - for which, it said, the 5.4 million parents who are voters will give the BN the two-thirds majority in Parliament that it seeks.