

Deputy minister: Let students join politics too
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With yesterday's announcement that graduate teachers are now allowed to join politics, Deputy Higher Education Minister Saifuddin Abdullah is calling for university students to receive the same privilege.

"The time is right for us to review our position, and to seriously think about the possibility of allowing university students to become members of political parties," said Saifuddin.

universiti student aiku uuca parliament protest 180808 08Speaking to Malaysiakini, he said that the Universities and University Colleges Act allows for local university students to engage in politics only after they obtain permission from the vice-chancellor (VC).

"If there is a clause saying that the VCs can allow it, we might as well allow the entire lot. But if it is going to be troublesome, might as well make more amendments to the act," he said.

More often than not, university students - who are prosecuted for "taking part in political campaigning", and have had their political studies club disbanded - face an uphill battle getting "consent" from the VC.

'Will curb money politics'

NONEApplauding the decision announced by chief secretary to the government Sidek Hassan, Saifuddin (right) said that the move may see a decrease in money politics.

Using Umno as an example, he said that it was only when teachers were officially banned from joining politics back in 1993 that the party saw an influx of corporate players and businessmen.

"The timing was like that. One can therefore make a conclusion based on that," he said, adding that teachers are supposed to be the moral conscience of society.

"Politics is very much a grassroots thing. There are graduate teachers all over the country, even in the kampungs. When the teachers are restricted from politics, the political branches are devoid of moral conscience and people with knowledge.

"After all, we don't have architects and engineers in every kampung," said Saifuddin, who is also an Umno supreme council member.

"I (had always) thought disallowing it was a mistake," he said.

education school books 280804 teacher and studentThe decision to ban teachers from joining political parties was made during the Mahathir administration, which had also banned university students from doing the same.

However, the current government has now overturned the decision, affording the chance to more than 190,000 graduate teachers to join and hold posts in political parties.

However the condition is that they must obtain prior written approval from the director-general of the Public Service Department or the secretary-general of the relevant

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