

Saifuddin to moot student involvement at Umno supreme council
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Umno Supreme Council member Saifuddin said he will propose that university students be allowed to take part in politics in the upcoming council meeting to ensure their active involvement in the field.

Saifuddin, who is also Deputy Higher Education Minister, said although the Universities and University Colleges Act was amended in 2008 to allow students of local public varsities to take part in political associations with permission from the vice-chancellor, it still needs to be reviewed again.

"The act should not distance students from politics, but instead include them in decision making processes," he said at a news conference to announce 10 finalists for the Fourth Junior Chamber International (JCI) Creative Young Entrepreneur Award, in Petaling Jaya today.

He said this when asked to comment on the government permitting graduate education service officers (teachers) on grades DG41 to DG48 to engage in politics starting August.

Regarding the proposal to be brought up at the meeting, Saifuddin said its main purpose was to recognise the rights of university students guaranteed by the constitution and extend public involvement in politics, especially among the younger generation.

"If as citizens they have the right to engage in politics, so why can't they do so as students," he said, adding that it would also attract more teenagers to register as voters.

On the decision allowing teachers to join politics, he said it was a healthy political development and would encourage clean political practices in the country.

Muhyiddin: 'keep it out of classrooms'

Meanwhile Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who was in South Korea for a four day visit ending tomorrow, today reminded graduate teachers who want to be active in politics not to bring their political ideologies to the classroom.

In reminding them to heed government circulars on the matter, Muhyiddin, who is also education minister, stressed that they would face disciplinary action if they were found to have flouted the rules.

"Now that they have been given permission by the chief secretary to the government to be active in politics, it is up to them which political party they want to support.

"We cannot discriminate...our hope as the Barisan Nasional (BN) government is for them to support us. If they choose to support the Opposition, we cannot stop them," he told Malaysian journalists in Seoul.

Yesterday, Chief Secretary to the Government Mohd Sidek Hassan announced that education service officers (teachers) in those grades will be permitted to engage in politics, effective Aug 1. Grade DG41 is the entry point for teachers in the civil service.

The decision clears some 140,000 teachers to partake in politics but they would have to get

written permission from the Education Ministry secretary-general first before they can do so.

Prior to this, the privilege was only available to officers in the support group provided they first obtained written permission from the Public Service Department director-general or the secretary-general of the relevant ministry.

Muhyiddin said the Education Ministry would be issuing detailed information on the decision soon but also reminded headmasters, principals and education department officers that the privilege did not apply to them.

He added that the move was good for the country as teachers had always played a leadership role in society.

On calls by the National Union of the Teaching Profession and the National Parent-Teachers Association for punishment against students for indiscipline to be reviewed in keeping with the times, Muhyiddin said very clear guidelines had been provided to heads of schools regarding this matter but added that the ministry was open to making improvements in the interest of students.

- Bernama

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