

Students still banned from politics, ministry wants news hushed
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The cabinet has decided against allowing university students to participate in party politics.

Higher Education Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin (right) announced this today, the Star reported this afternoon.

This follows the statement by Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin yesterday that the government would not change its stand against allowing student involvement in politics.

Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad had also voiced his disagreement with the proposal to amend the Universities and University Colleges Act to this effect.

Khaled said the decision, however, did not prevent students from learning about and following political developments.

"Section 15 of the Universities and University Colleges Act (AUKU) 1971 is already adequate as students are allowed to be involved in political parties if they obtain permission from their vice-chancellors," the Star reported him as saying.

In the latest development, federal government owned Bernama issued a note to editors at 6.30pm stating that Higher Education Ministry has requested the press not to publish any news on this.

Reacting to the government announcement, Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin expressed strong disagreement on Twitter.

"(The) cabinet decision not allowing university students to be involved in political parties is gutless and indicates outdated thinking. There," quipped Khairy, who is also BN Youth head. In a follow-up tweet, he said: "Here's a hint for the cabinet: You want the youth vote, start by trusting them."

Among those who had expressed support for allowing student involvement in politics were Deputy Education Minister Saifuddin Abdullah.

Meanwhile, PKR Youth chief Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin (right) said the cabinet's decision 'proves' the government's intention to restrict the minds of university students.

"What is the difference between teachers who have been allowed to participate in politics and university students and lecturers?"

"PKR Youth believes and is convinced the reason (for the decision) is the concern that if the same rights were given to students, issues (that are of concern to) the people would be raised and drown Umno-BN," said the opposition leader in a statement.

Shamsul Iskandar also challenged the government to prohibit the activities of various Umno-linked groups that operate in local and foreign universities, such as Kelab Umno, Kelab Aspirasi and Puteri Umno.

"The reality is that the students are the agents of change for the masses," said the lawyer.