

**Student groups: We want to take part in politics**  
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The Umno-linked Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung (GPMS) has urged the government to reconsider its decision to disallow students from taking part in party politics.

With the easy availability of the Internet, students are already exposed to politics.

"If we do not allow them to participate (legally), they will just find other ways to do so," its president Jais Abdul Karim told Malaysiakini today.

However, he suggested that the implementation be carried out in stages.

"First the government can introduce an elective subject on recent political developments. Students who are interested in politics can attend the class.

"Experienced lecturers should guide them. Field trips to by-elections campaigns or even general elections can be organised," he said, adding that students can then set up their own clubs or alumni so they can debate further issues of common interest.

And these clubs, Jais stressed, should be guided by university officers who were former student leaders to create a vibrant and productive environment.

"In the second stage, perhaps in a few years time we can have a two-party system in university elections. For example Pakatan against BN," he added.

'Leave it to us to decide'

NONE Kumpulan Aktivis Mahasiswa Independen (Kami) president Muhammad Hilman Idham (right) feels that the final decision on the matter should be left to the students.

"Why doesn't the government conduct a poll in the universities and ask if we want to participate in politics?" he asked.

He added that the cabinet's decision is political in nature when the bigger issue is whether the government is willing to give power to students to decide what they want.

"Even if the BN allows us to participate in politics and amends Universities and University Colleges Act 1971, Pakatan can change it when they come into power. So in the end it is all about politics," he said.

President of Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia (PKPIM) Muhammad Faisal Abdul Aziz rebutted the argument that participation in politics will affect the students academically.

"Our education system is focussed on examinations. But students should know current affairs as well. For example if I am a political science student, then my experience in politics will surely help me in my studies," he said.

He argued that allowing students to participate in politics will help them in their personal development and promote awareness.

"If we are old enough to vote, surely we are mature enough to handle politics," he added.

'Fight will continue'

Meanwhile president of Gabungan Mahasiswa Islam Se-Malaysia (Gamis) Mohd Idris Mohd Yusoff described the decision as unacceptable, vowing that the fight for student participation in party politics will continue.

NONE "We are going to meet with Deputy Higher Education Minister Saifuddin Abdullah (right) as he had shown support for our cause.

"We will make our case and tell him why students should be given the freedom to choose to participate in politics," he said.

Idris added that if Umno still indulges in such "old fashioned thinking" then they will fail to garner support from young progressive students.

"We are sick of Umno's brand of politics," he added.

Yesterday, Higher Education Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin announced that the cabinet has decided against allowing university students to participate in party politics.

This move had come under heavy criticism by youth leaders from both the government and opposition.

Umno Youth leader Khairy Jamaluddin expressed his strong disagreement on Twitter. He charged that the cabinet's decision is "gutless" and indicates "outdated thinking".

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

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