

Amendment To The UUCA 1971 Welcomed

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The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (the Commission) welcomes the move to amend Section 15 of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (UUCA) that would allow university students aged 21 and above space for the exercise of their constitutional rights to freedom of expression and to form associations.

These rights are guaranteed under Article 10(1) of the Federal Constitution and are enshrined in Articles 19 - 21 of the Universal Declarations of Human Rights.

The civil and political rights awareness amongst the younger generations should be viewed positively and supported fully as university students are the future leaders of the country.

The formal education and training that they receive in the university should be supplemented and complemented by experiences and lessons that are available off-campus in order that they would become better leaders of society.

There should not be unreasonable curtailment of their fundamental rights to express themselves.

The Commission is pleased with the commitment of the Prime Minister to transform the country into a modern and progressive nation. The move should be seen as a step forward in bringing the nation to another level, economically and politically.

The Commission also notes and welcomes the recent Court of Appeal's decision which declared section 15(5)(a) of the UUCA unconstitutional, on the ground that it violated the freedom of expression.

In line with the Prime Minister's aspirations for the nation, the Commission urges the Government to reconsider its intention to appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal and to continue the efforts to further uphold and protect the rights of the people.

HASMY AGAM is Chairman of The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

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