

7,000 Facebook 'likes' over Najib flag incident
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By Lisa J. Ariffin

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 20 — Close to 7,000 people have backed a Facebook campaign supporting student activist Adam Adli Abdul Halim, who came under fire for the infamous "flag incident" last Saturday.

During Saturday's march for academic freedom, Adam had lowered and then raised a flag with a picture of Datuk Seri Najib Razak in front of the Umno headquarters here, immediately drawing criticism from the public and several government officials.

Screenshot of the Facebook page at 9.20am on December 20, 2011.

However, the Facebook page, believed to have been set up a day after the march by the 100-strong group, has been attracting "likes" from university students who demand the repeal of the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA), which they say denies them academic freedom.

As at 11.06 last night, "We Are All Adam Adli" had garnered 4,894 "likes", with the number increasing as netizens now appear to be "sharing" the page on their respective walls. It was 7,031 at 9.13am today.

"Support Adam and all undergraduates who are brave enough to speak out!" said user Shahrul Effandi.

"Finally undergraduates are no longer being controlled and fed by Umno/BN. Back then, undergraduates were a minority in voicing out public interest opinions, NOW... the world has changed. See the gangster ways used by Umno to threaten the students. Don't you dare touch Adam Adli!" user Selva Vathany Pillai commented.

Yesterday, Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin said the government remains committed to amend the UUCA to provide for greater academic freedom despite the incident.

The Umno deputy minister is among several from the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) who have backed a proposal to amend the university law for greater academic freedom.

On Saturday, the student activists representing Solidariti Anak Malaysia had demonstrated outside the Umno building before Saifuddin agreed to meet them and accept a six-point demand from the group staged a sit-down protest a few roads away.

He said he believed in "undergraduate idealism" and supported their right to freedom of expression in a democracy, adding that "the flag-lowering incident is not a part of the democracy that is meant".

Saifuddin, who chaired a roundtable on the proposal for the law, said talks were going well and would be continued to seek wider and more open views.

"It strengthens the commitment to uphold true democracy that is desired by amending the UUCA," he said in a statement.

He said the committee to amend the UUCA would begin work shortly and expects the government would be ready to present the revised law in Parliament next year.

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