

**Allow uni students to engage in politics, says deputy minister**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 – Higher Education Deputy Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah has called for university students to be allowed to engage in politics on the back of the government's plans to repeal the Internal Security Act (ISA).

The Umno supreme council member said that Datuk Seri Najib Razak's raft of reforms announced last Thursday showed the prime minister understood the need to meet current political demands and this must include allowing the young to be politically active.

"In light of such a big law like the ISA being repealed, why not the University and University Colleges Act (UUCA) being amended to allow politics?"

"We have shown respect to the public's new maturity. Now we must extend that respect to the student population," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Saifuddin has repeatedly called for the repeal of Section 15 – which prohibits students from being politically active – of the UUCA since he was appointed as deputy minister for higher education and has written a proposal paper on the matter just over a year ago.

He said however, that repealing the entire act "would cause more harm than good" as it is an administrative act that governs all universities, without which the entire system would be in limbo.

His call comes just days after Najib's Malaysia Day where he announced plans to repeal the ISA, three Emergency Declarations and also the need for annual printing and publishing permits when both Dewan Negara and Dewan Rakyat have their next sitting.

The Umno president said the new laws will be enacted to protect the peace, harmony and security of the country but admitted that they were "risky but necessary for our survival."

Saifuddin said that the BN chief would "pursue a comprehensive political transformation" which would see Najib make more progressive announcements when tabling Budget 2012 in Parliament next month as well as in his policy address in Umno's next general assembly.

He said this was because Najib recognised that social media is now shaping political awareness, especially from a young age.

"Politics has now changed and the government no longer has monopoly on information.

"It is no longer just about elections. Students also want their voices heard and to have increased participation in politics," the Temerloh MP added.

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